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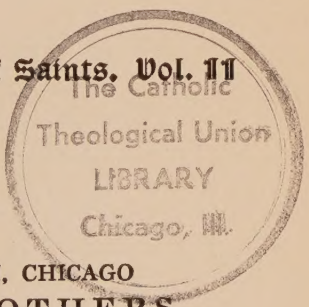
BISHOP OF NASHVILLE

VOLUME VI

Homilies for the Common of Saints. Vol. II



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NEW SERIES OF HOMILIES FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

HOMILY I

Mass of a Confessor and Bishop

Sacerdotes Dei, ETC.

AND the others indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue: But this, for that he continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood. Whereby he is able also to save forever them that come to God by him; always living to make intercession for us. For it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as the other priests, to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, in offering himself.—*Heb.* vii. 23–27.

THIS brief passage from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews is read in the second Mass of Confessors and Bishops, and a more

appropriate one could not have been selected, since it treats of the priesthood of Christ and its excellence. Every pontiff and bishop of the Catholic Church participates of this priesthood, or to speak more precisely is its continuator.[1]

Before beginning the commentary it will be well to consider what precedes and get the sequence of the Apostle's ideas and the thread of his argument.

As I have said elsewhere, the scope of St. Paul's whole Letter to the Hebrews is to show that the New Law of Christ is incomparably superior to the Mosaic Law and that in consequence the latter must give place to the former. The essential and leading part of any sacred law whatever is the priesthood, and hence St. Paul should and does speak of the ancient priesthood and of the new, which is personified in Jesus Christ.

In the verses immediately preceding the Epistle of the Mass the Apostle discourses of Melchisedech, a figure of Christ, and goes on to show how he is superior to the Levitical and

[1] Among the ancient Romans the chief priest or priests were called pontiffs, because they had charge of the bridges. The word was adopted by the Church and with us "pontiff" means a bishop, who has the fulness of the priesthood of Order, but not of jurisdiction, and it also means Pope, who has the fulness of both; just as the term "general" signifies equally a commander of a brigade, or a division or a corps, or of a whole army, so the word "pontiff" signifies either a bishop or a Pope, and to distinguish the latter from the former he is called *Supreme* Pontiff.

Mosaic priesthood because he is not of Abraham, because he blessed Abraham and received tithes from him, because he was before the Mosaic priesthood, because Jesus Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, and because the new priesthood comes immediately from God and was established with an oath. And here begin the verses to be explained, in which St. Paul, besides other important matters, makes it absolutely clear that the Christian priesthood is more excellent than the Hebrew. Let us see how he does this.

"*And the others indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue.*" Consider the Mosaic priesthood; it bore upon it many marks of its high dignity; as death took one after another, in order that it might not cease to exist, it was necessary to fill their places and as they died to substitute others, and this was what was done. But it is quite different, St. Paul says, in the priesthood of Christ. Christ, the Priest, risen, dies no more, He lives forever, and hence His priesthood is eternal; it does not, nor can it, ever pass from one to another as that of Aaron, and for this reason it is infinitely superior to it. The priesthood of Aaron and Moses was mortal, that of Christ immortal, as the Apostle goes on to add, completing his teaching; Jesus on the contrary, in

that He continueth, or lives forever, has an everlasting priesthood: *"But this, for that He continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood."*

I see a difficulty, which naturally suggests itself and which it is worth while stating and solving. Some one may say: Even in the Church, priests, no matter what their grade, including the Supreme Pontiff, by a law of nature die and are succeeded by others, and this succession will go on until the end of time; how, then, can St. Paul say that the priesthood of Christ is immortal, that there can therefore be no succession in it, and that it is not transmissible? How can the statement of St. Paul be reconciled with the fact that we have constantly under our eyes? When Aaron died another succeeded to him, and another succeeded to him, and so on generation after generation, and each of the successors had equal rights with the first; and the same took place in the case of the inferior grades of the Mosaic priesthood. Christ, God-Man, had the fulness of sacerdotal power without any limitation, precisely because He was God-Man. Have Peter and his successors, the apostles and their successors, the disciples and their successors, power equal to that of Christ? No, they, each in his own grade, have the power that Christ gave them, in the measure and according to

the form which it pleased Him to ordain. Peter and his successors are not successors to Christ, but only His vicars, ministers, or delegates, and this is true of the other grades of the hierarchy, whether bishops or priests, who have part of, but not the whole, power of Christ. Can the Roman Pontiff change what Christ has established? Can he, for example, take away one of the seven sacraments, or add one? Can he derogate from the law of Christ, which ordains that man shall have only one wife? Can he allow a marriage lawfully contracted and consummated to be dissolved? Can he abolish the order of bishops, or priests, or deacons? Certainly not; because he can change nothing that Christ has established; here he can do nothing, because his power is not equal to that of Christ; he is not His successor, but His vicar. Here, say, is a king; granted that he has a plenary power; he names a vicar and deputes him to govern the State during his own absence. Can he, as a vicar, abrogate the laws of the king? Can he change the constitution of the State? No, of course not; his power is restricted to the limits prescribed to him and he is always subject to the king; so also Peter and his successors, much more bishops and priests of the second order. The priesthood of Christ in its complete fulness is wholly and always in Christ alone; in Him it never ceases,

never increases, and never diminishes; it is ever the same; the Supreme Pontiffs, bishops, and priests, in varying measure, participate of it, as His servants, or ministers, or vicars. Hence, speaking precisely, Jesus Christ is alone the true Priest, since He has this power in Himself, of Himself, and it can not be lost; Pontiffs, bishops, and priests are His instruments, His executors, His hands in the various offices they exercise and in the various parts of the earth where they exercise these offices. Behold the sun; it alone has light of itself; the planets also have light, but only in the measure in which they receive it from the sun, not in themselves or from themselves. Christ is the sun, and priests, from the least to the greatest, are stars illuminated by the sun and participating in varying degrees of its light. And so true is it that Jesus Christ is the one only true and everlasting Priest, that He alone can and does work in and through each single priest, as they succeed one another in time and space; and whatever they do, they do always in His name and by His authority.

Does the priest baptize? He says: "I baptize thee." Does the priest loose from sin? He says: "I absolve thee." Does the bishop confer Confirmation? He says: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation." Does he give

power to loose from sin? He places his hands upon the head of the young levite, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost." Does he give him power to offer the Holy Sacrifice? Putting his hands upon the head and presenting the sacred instruments, he says to him: "Receive power to offer Mass for the living and the dead." What more? Do priest and bishop offer the Holy Sacrifice, the greatest act of the priesthood? What words do they pronounce at that solemn moment? Listen to them and be amazed: "This is My body: this is the chalice of My blood." But how is this? Are the body and blood of priests and bishops under the species of bread and wine? Faith teaches that there is there the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How, then, do they say: "This is My body: this is My blood?" They speak in the person of Christ, they form one with Him, or rather, to speak more accurately, Christ speaks by their mouth; by them He baptizes, absolves, gives the Holy Ghost, creates His own soldiers, His own priests, and offers Himself in sacrifice. We priests are but His hands and instruments, for the moment we lend Him our voice and our labor; we are the wire along which passes the electrical spark, bearing light and thought. My friends, I wish you to bring home to yourselves and lay up in your hearts this great truth, that Jesus Christ and He alone

is the great and everlasting Priest; in Him alone is the fulness of all power and truth, of all grace and sanctification, because He is God and man, our only true mediator; everything that enlightens and sanctifies men comes from Him; but in this divine work of enlightening and sanctifying men He associates with Himself priests and bishops, He uses their ministry, as you use the pen you write with, or as your soul uses your tongue to communicate to others your ideas and your wishes. Consider the priests and bishops who lived at the time of the apostles, who live now, and who will live until the end of time; each and all of these fulfil always and everywhere, even in the most distant parts of the globe, the selfsame offices; they baptize, absolve, confirm, ordain, offer sacrifice, and so on; but the One working in all these ministries throughout all time and in every place is Jesus Christ, and He alone. He is the Sun that never sets, that from the height of heaven colors variously all creatures that come under His rays; He is immobile and ever the same, creatures are in motion, are ever changing, beginning, and disappearing.

It is time to go on to another sentence, which is an amplification of the two just explained: "*Whereby He, Jesus Christ, is able to save forever them that come to God by Him.*"[1] The

[1] The words *in perpetuum* are in Greek εις το παντελες, equiv-

end of the priesthood is the salvation of all men; and since God wills all men everywhere and always to be saved, so also ought the priesthood to be ubiquitous in time and place, and such is the priesthood of Christ, who has an *everlasting priesthood: He is able to save forever, or fully.* Why is it said: *"He is able to save,"* rather than *"He saves?"* To give us once more to understand that our salvation does not depend solely on God, but requires also the work of others. Of whom? Of each one who will be saved. God *is able to save us,* but that our salvation may be a fact the co-operation of each of us is required. And how is this co-operation on the part of men brought about? St. Paul tells us they must draw near to God through Christ: *That come to God by Him.* We must draw near to God! How, by approaching Him by bodily movement? No; God is near to us; in Him we live and move and are; we must draw near to Him by the acts of the mind and by the heart's love, or by intellect and will; the soul rises up to God, borne aloft on the two wings of faith and love: *That come to God,* uniting itself to Him, who wills that all shall be saved.

But between us miserable creatures and the

alent to *perfectly,* or *fully,* embodying the idea of *duration,* which answers to the words *semper vivens,* that follow. Both senses are equally good, but the first harmonizes better with the etymology of the words.

infinite greatness of God there is sunk a great abyss. Who will throw a bridge across the interminable abyss? Jesus Christ; He unites our human nature to His divine Person by a tie so close that the two are one sole being, God and man, true God and true man. In Him the two natures, the human and the divine, ineffably embrace and kiss, and the two shores of the finite and infinite are united by this bridge, which no one shall ever be able to break down, and by means of it the divine treasures are heaped upon men, and the thoughts and affections, the acts, prayers, and adorations of men go up to God. *By or through Him,* cries St. Paul; Jesus Christ, the everlasting Priest, placed between earth and heaven, takes all men, who wish to go to God, within His arms, and places them within the arms of God: *Them that come to God by Him.* My dear friends, which of us does not want to go to God, to save his soul? Very well, then, let us not deceive ourselves; we can go to God only by Jesus Christ, the one bridge that unites earth and heaven: *By Him we have access to the Father. By Him are they able to be saved who come to God,* as the great apostle says.

He, Jesus Christ, *always living to make intercession for us.* One of the highest offices of the priesthood, and therefore of Jesus Christ, who possesses the priesthood by excel-

lence, is prayer. When on earth Jesus prayed, He prayed always, He prayed with all the energy and ardor of His soul, He prayed with tears: *With a strong cry and tears,* and now that He is in heaven He continues His ministry of high-priest and mediator, praying for us; rather His very life is a ceaseless prayer: *Always living to make intercession for us.* It is hardly necessary to say to you that Jesus does not pray inasmuch as He is God (for as God what could He ask?), but inasmuch as He is man. Inasmuch as He is man He is a priest and mediator. And how does He pray in heaven? Do not fancy that He prostrates Himself before the majesty of His Father, that He joins His hands, that He speaks in a suppliant tone, or does other similar acts; He *lives always to make intercession for us* by His sole presence. Those hands and feet bored through with nails, that body outraged in a thousand ways, that heart rent asunder with a lance, that soul flooded with grief and unspeakable agonies, that entire blessed humanity, offered as a holocaust on the altar of the Cross in expiation for our sins, but now glorious and flashing with infinite splendors, stands there in the presence of the august Trinity; His very presence, the very sight of Him, is a cry, a canticle, a hymn of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, and prayer. The entire humanity, whether glorious in heaven, or

a wayfarer on earth, or cleansing in purgatory; the whole immense army of the angels, all, all, turn toward Christ, betake themselves to Him; all group about Him and center in Him, who is their head; He is the representative, the mouth, the tongue of all reasonable beings, of those who have arrived at their goal, and of those who are journeying toward it; He beckons them on, calls out to them, takes them to Himself, covers them with His shadow, and over all shines the splendor of His light; for some He gives thanks, for others He adores, and for us, still far away on this great battlefield, He prays: *Always living to make intercession for us.* How sweet is our hope! What a comfort is ours to know that Christ is praying for us!

We miserable sinners do not deserve to have up there on high such and so great a priest to pray for us; but this was a necessity for us and God in His measureless mercy granted it to us: *For it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest.* And here the Apostle gives us in a line a description of His greatness: *Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens.* Let us try to get at the meaning of these words, which St. Paul uses in drawing the character of Christ, the Priest. He is *holy.* The word "holy" signifies the opposite of common and profane and means what is clean of every stain

and worthy of God,[1] what is dedicated and sacred to Him. He is *innocent;* that is free from all malice and from every fault; one who does not do, and does not wish to do harm to any one, who could not, and would not deceive. He is *undefiled,* chaste, untouched, inviolable, inaccessible to any blemish. He is *holy* as regards God, to whom He is wholly consecrated; He is *innocent* as regards His neighbors, to whom He does not, nor can He do, any harm; He is undefiled as regards Himself, because He is clean of every stain; this is the Pontiff, who was, and is, a necessity to us and whom God in His goodness provided for us.

It would seem that these exalted characteristics were sufficient to bring out the greatness of the everlasting Priest, Jesus Christ; but St. Paul in his enthusiasm goes on to speak of others, which are indeed contained or implied in those already mentioned, but which throw a fuller light on them. Jesus Christ is a Pontiff *separated from sinners,* who has nothing in common with sinners, neither sin, nor inclination to sin, nor the consequences of sin; and this more fully explains the triple quality of *holy, innocent,* and *undefiled.* Nor does he stop here; Jesus Christ, our Pontiff, came in-

[1] In the Greek text we read not ἅγιος but ὅσιος which is equivalent to pious, God-fearing, devout, sacred to God. The difference is not great, and both words are perfectly applicable to Christ.

deed upon the earth, lived upon the earth, but He is now raised above the heavens: *And made higher than the heavens.* He is higher than all men, higher than the heavens, higher than the angels; such greatness is His and such greatness and glory encompass Him that He has no equal. And now, St. Paul seems to ask, is any comparison possible between the Old Law, represented by the ancient priesthood, and the New Law, represented by the Supreme Pontiff, Jesus Christ?

And there is still another title which places the priesthood of Christ above the priesthood of old. What? The high-priest of the Old Law offered sacrifice to God, as was prescribed. But for whom did he offer it? First of all for himself, for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people, since he, as well as the people, was a sinner; but not so the High-Priest, Jesus Christ; He offers sacrifice, but not for Himself, for He, being holy, innocent, and undefiled, has no need of doing so; He offers it for us and for all men: "*Who needeth not daily, as other priests* (the levites) *to offer sacrifices first for His own sins, and then for the people's.*" The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was offered in expiation of the sins of the people, and, as St. Paul says, it was offered *once,* because that one sacrifice was enough and more than enough. In the Old Law countless sacri-

fices were offered and offered *daily*. The repetition and extraordinary number of sacrifices clearly show that they were not efficacious, since if one alone had been sufficient to placate and honor God and to expiate the sins of men there would have been no need of repeating them so often and under such a variety of forms. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is one and only one, nor is there any necessity of repeating it, since it is more than sufficient for the need: *With Him is plentiful redemption.*

You will say: In the New Law also the sacrifice of the Mass is offered daily and is repeated times without number in every part of the globe; hence the argument used by the Apostle against the sacrifices of the Old Law may be used with equal force against the sacrifice of Christ in the New. To solve the difficulty it will only be necessary to call to mind the teaching of the Church on this point. She teaches that the sacrifice of the Cross, offered by Christ, is one and one only; that every Mass is a true and proper sacrifice, but not distinct from that of the Cross; that it is that of the Cross and no other, from which it differs only in manner. The sacrifice of the Mass represents that of the Cross and is absolutely one with it. Is a person multiplied when the images of him are multiplied? These may be as numerous as you like, but the person is ever the

same, one and only one. So also countless Masses are celebrated, but it is ever the self-same sacrifice of the Cross. The Victim is ever the same, Jesus Christ; the principal Priest who offers the Mass is ever the same, Jesus Christ, who alone says: "This is My body; this is My blood." On the Cross the blood was poured out and was visible; here everything is hidden under the species of bread and wine. An abundant spring comes forth from the side of a high mountain; it forms a river; it descends and traverses a vast plain; on the two banks of this river a great number of canals or dikes are cut, into which the water of the river enters, irrigates and makes fertile fields and meadows. The spring is ever one and only one and the same; the water that flows in the river, and from the river, is drawn off into the dikes, or sluices, is the same; the places over which the water flows and spreads may change; it may flow at this time or that, in this way or that, but the spring does not change and neither does the water. Similarly, there is but one sole sacrifice of Christ, that of the Cross, but the manner of participating of it throughout time and space is different.

Let us sum up the sublime teaching of the Apostle in the few sentences of his just explained. The Hebrew priesthood passed from one to another, because its perpetuity was pre-

vented by death; the priesthood of Christ is stable and perpetual, because He can not die; hence He and He alone can save and does save all who unite themselves to Him by faith and charity; He fulfills the office of the priesthood by praying for us in heaven; He who is holy, innocent, and undefiled, who has nothing in common with sinners, who dwells in the highest heaven, who has no need to offer sacrifice for Himself, who offered on the Cross the one only sacrifice abundant for all, and who by means of priests renews it on earth and will renew it until the end of time, prays for us there on high by His very presence.

The holy Pontiff, whose memory we honor to-day, was a faithful copy of the everlasting Pontiff, Jesus Christ; He participated of His divine priesthood and traversed the earth praying, announcing the truth, dispensing gratuitously the treasures of grace that he had gratuitously received; through him Jesus Christ renewed the sacrifice of the Cross; after the pattern of Jesus Christ he lived holy, innocent, and undefiled, and now he dwells with Him in heaven and intercedes for us, continuing there on high the office which he began here on earth.

HOMILY II

Mass of a Confessor and Bishop

WATCH ye therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come. But this know ye, that if the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Wherefore be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come. Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season? Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Amen I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods.—*Matt.* xxiv. 42–47.

OUR Lord after replying to the questions put to Him by the disciples, namely: "When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the world?" concludes by impressively reminding them of the necessity of watchfulness. This warning is contained in the brief passage of the Gospel just read to you; and none could

have been more timely. Watchfulness in every condition of life is not only useful, but necessary, and it is most necessary when men find themselves face to face with severe trials and troubles, and when dangers are gathering about them. Such was the condition of the apostles, to whom Jesus Christ had foretold the appalling events of the destruction of the Temple and of His second coming, and the no less appalling signs that were to precede both. Now, my friends, this watchfulness is no less necessary to us than it was to the apostles, for we are day by day engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with enemies, who are ceaselessly laying snares for us and assaulting us. Moreover, we too, like the apostles, are awaiting the coming of Christ; we are nearer to it than were they and ought to fear it more.

Jesus Christ begins His warning thus: "*Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come.*" This passage of Our Lord's warning contains two points—first, the necessity of watchfulness, and next, the chief reason why we should be watchful. *Watch.* What does *watching* imply? It implies that we must reflect, consider, and weigh all our external acts and all our words, and forecast the consequences of them; but to consider and weigh our external acts we must attend to

our internal acts, to our thoughts, affections, and desires, which are the root of our external conduct and its cause. During the time of war the general places sentinels here and there, to the right and the left in advance of the army. What do these sentinels do by day and night? Think you that they sleep and rest tranquilly? They watch with arms in their hands; they are startled at every noise and listen attentively; their eyes are ever turned in the direction whence they know the enemy is to come; they observe his every movement; the instant they suspect he is approaching they cry out: "To arms!" It is impossible to take them unawares. They watch because they dread being attacked when they least expect it. So also we Christians, one and all, should be like so many sentinels; we have an enemy, and such an enemy, in front of us, behind us, to the right and to the left, outside us and, still more, within us; he sleeps not either by day or by night; he employs snares, force, and open violence; and the prize at stake in this war is the interests, not of earth or of this life, but of heaven and the life to come. It is, then, absolutely necessary for us *to watch* if we would gain a knowledge of ourselves and of our enemies, of their arts and strength, and of the surest means of combating and overcoming

them. He who does not watch will be taken by surprise and defeated.

"*Watch,*" says Christ, "*because ye know not what hour your Lord will come.*" To which coming of Christ is reference here made? It may be understood to be His last coming, but more likely His first is meant, the one nearest us and most decisive, as St. Augustine thinks, which will be at the moment when each of us dies. Our divine Saviour does not say that we shall not know the year or the day of His coming, that is of our death, but that we shall not know the *hour:* "*Ye know not what hour,*" since any moment of our lives may be the last, as experience teaches.

And why does God wish to keep the last day and the hour of our death concealed from us? Would it not have been better to have made it known to us to a certainty? Then we could prepare ourselves for this passage to another life, and only the impious, unbelievers, and fools would present themselves to the divine Judge unprepared.

God wished to keep hidden from us the end of our days, and the nature and manner of our taking off, chiefly for two reasons. Did we know this to a certainty our life would be one long agony; we should be like an unfortunate criminal condemned to death; we should be ever counting the months, the days, the hours, and

minutes; we should be ever, so to speak, drinking in death by gulps and draughts. Life would be unbearable and harrowing; and hence it was and is a great mercy God does us in veiling within the thick darkness of the future the time and place and manner of our death. In the next place, as St. John Chrysostom says, or rather one who interprets his thought: "If men knew the hour they were to die, they would put off repenting and making provision for themselves until then. In order that they may be solicitous, not only then, but always, and may labor assiduously throughout life to be prepared for the end that must come to all of us, and that is distant from none, God ordained that they should not know the hour of their taking off, and foretold that it would come as does a thief."[1] It is therefore a blessing that the knowledge of the day of death is kept from us; and, as St. Jerome says, this uncertainty obliges us to live as if we might die any day, and impels us to labor as if we were to live forever.[2]

[1] "Si scirent homines, quando sunt potissimum morituri, ea prorsus hora poenitere studerent, et diligentiam circa illam horam ostenderent. Ne illo igitur solummodo tempore, sed continue diligentes sint, pergere totam vitam magno studio satagant se paratos tenere ad communem omnium finem et eum, qui cuique proprius est, fecit Deus ut ignorarent, furisque instar futurum praedixit." (Euthymius ad hunc loc.)

[2] "Sic vive quasi quotidie moriturus: sic stude quasi semper victurus." (S. Hieronym.)

The better to bring home to His hearers the necessity of watchfulness, Our Lord couples with the thought of His coming unawares a short and familiar similitude that makes the truth perfectly clear: "*If the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer the house to be broken open.*" Our divine Master says in substance: Here is a good father of a family; he has children, and servants, and much money laid away in his strong box; the country in which he lives is infested with thieves, who by day or night break into houses, and, once there, plunder them of their valuables and mercilessly murder the owners. Now say that one of these good fathers is warned that on such a night, at such an hour, thieves are to come, break in and pillage his house. What will the good man do? Think you that he will leave the doors open, or carelessly closed, and lie down and sleep tranquilly, as if nothing were on his mind? He could not do so if he would, for the fright and terror of having his house entered at any moment would keep him in a turmoil of dread and agitation. I fancy I can see the good man, trembling and solicitous for the safety of those dear to him, going anxiously through the house, securely closing doors here and windows there, barricading himself in it as in a small fortress, and hastily sending off

messengers to the police, to friends, and acquaintances, asking them to come at once to his aid; and I can see him getting ready his arms, and all excited waiting the hour of their coming, determined at all hazards to drive off the thieves. At the slightest noise he is all excited, rises, listens, calls his men about him, and seizes his weapons. When they approach and attempt to open the door he braces himself against it; to their promises and threats he responds by opening fire upon them and by calling aloud for help to those near him and to those in other parts of the house, but he will never surrender, or open the door to let them in, no matter what the consequences. So, my friends, ought we also to do. Our thieves are our enemies—the world, the devil, the wicked, and our uncurbed passions; they must ever find the door of our will locked and bolted; we must always keep the key of it in our hand and neither prayers nor threats, neither flattery nor violence should induce us to give it up; if we do not open it, by giving our consent, they never can enter; if we allow them to enter they will rob us of the treasure of grace and murder our poor souls.

Not only did the good man of the house not open the door or allow the thieves to enter on any pretext, but he made use of his arms to drive them off. Our arms of offense and de-

fense against such enemies, arms which we have ever ready and at hand, may be all reduced to prayer. When the enemy blusters and threatens at the door of our will let us lift our minds and hearts to God and cry out confidently to Him: "Lord, make haste, come to my aid, strengthen my weakness, save me, free me from the wicked one: *Deliver us from evil.*" The good man of the house, when he was in such dire straits, called out to his neighbors and friends to come to his rescue; so should we appeal to our friends and advocates, the saints, and beg them to make intercession for us with God and to obtain for us the strength to put the common enemy to flight.

Having touched upon this beautiful and natural similitude of the father of a family, who keeps watch by night to prevent thieves from forcing in the door of the house, Our Lord by implication applies it to that which all His disciples should do, saying: "*Wherefore be you always ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come.*" Here Jesus likens Himself to a thief, not in that a thief steals from others, but in that he comes unawares; and so also shall Jesus come to demand a reckoning of our works at the hour of death, and hence He wishes to rouse us and stimulate us to be ever on the watch, for the entire life

of man ought to be one continuous vigil, as the phrase runs: *Vita mortalium vigilia.*

Our Saviour passes on to another familiar similitude, still with a view of fixing deeper in the minds of His hearers the necessity of watchfulness in so important a matter. He asks: *"Who is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in due season?"* In ancient times it was not unusual to pay servants their wages, not in money, but in provisions, and the same usage prevails in some places even at the present day. The master of the house selected from among his servants one to act as proctor, whose duty it was to distribute to the servants the provisions due them. Christ asks His hearers: "Who, think you, is the servant who, being set over his fellow servants, will in the discharge of his duties merit the praise of being called a faithful and prudent servant?" And to this question He Himself gives the answer: "He will be a faithful and wise servant who shall distribute provisions at the proper time."

This usage introduced here by Christ by way of similitude reminds me of the exalted and very important office committed to us priests, and especially to those entrusted with the care of souls. You, my friends of the faithful, are

domestics in the house of the Lord, or the Church, and we, your brethren, are servants of Jesus Christ, charged with the office of distributing at due times the bread of life, the word of God, and the sacraments. You not only may, but you have a right, to receive this meat, this food of your souls, which Jesus Christ has stored in His Church; and not only have you the right, but you are in duty bound to ask for it, to take it as you need it; and we priests have imposed upon us a sacred duty faithfully to distribute it to you all. My friends, it will not be amiss if we all, gathered here together, examine our consciences on this point. We priests ought to ask our consciences if we have at the times and seasons appointed by the Church given the faithful the food of the soul, by preaching to them the word of God and administering the sacraments; we should ask ourselves if we have announced to you the word of God simply and clearly, in language suited to your capacity, and with zeal and charity, as befits ministers of Jesus Christ, if we have administered to you the sacraments, receiving you in the tribunal of penance with fatherly affection, like good physicians healing the wounds of your souls, distributing the Blessed Eucharist, the bread of life by excellence, and responding to all your just demands. Woe to us if we shall come short of our duties and fail to be

faithful and provident servants in the house of the Lord. Woe to us if because of our negligence, or of our lack of zeal and charity, or of our want of knowledge and failure to study as we should, one single soul is lost! Of all this the divine Judge will demand a most rigorous reckoning. And you, too, my brethren, ought to examine your consciences and inquire whether or not you have been indolent and negligent in coming to church, in approaching the sacraments, in listening to the word of God, in using all other means to nurture your faith, revive your hope, and inflame your charity. If the duty is laid upon us to give you this food of the soul, a duty is also laid upon you to receive it at our hands; let us then, all of us, see that we discharge our duty; we ours, and you yours.

And when the lord, that is, Jesus Christ, shall come to examine how things have been going with His servants, *"blessed will that servant be whom his lord shall find so doing,"* that is, who shall be found to be a faithful and wise administrator of the goods of the lord. He shall receive a reward adequate to his fidelity and foresight. What will that reward be? *Amen, I say to you he shall place him over all his goods.* This is one of the various forms under which Jesus Christ represents eternal bliss. It means the same thing as the other

forms, so frequently to be met with in Holy Writ, such as: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many, enter thou into the joy of the Lord—Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven—The Lord making them sit down and going into the midst of them gave to each his share—Every one that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands for My name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess the kingdom of heaven." Jesus Christ is ever ending His discourses by promising an everlasting reward to those who will believe in the doctrine He teaches and faithfully put it in practice, for we are so constituted that without the hope of a reward we can not bear up against the fatigues and trials incident to living a virtuous life, any more than can the workman bring himself to labor day in and day out without being certain of being paid his wages at the end of his toil.

As I said in the beginning of the Homily, the lesson to be drawn from this passage of the Gospel which we have been considering is the necessity of being watchful. Watchfulness is necessary to all, but especially to those who hold any office whatever. And what office can be more exalted and more important than that committed to confessors and bishops? It is

their duty to govern the diocese; to rule the inferior clergy, both priests and pastors; to look after the government, education, and training of young clerics growing up in seminaries; to watch over the discipline of convents and religious houses, which are so many houses and centers of Christian life from whence go forth the energy and activity of the Church; to ascertain the errors that threaten the purity and simplicity of faith, to unmask them and protect the people against them. It is their duty to preserve ecclesiastical discipline intact, to lift their voice in warning against disorders and public scandals, and to make Christian virtues flourish everywhere. It is their duty to strengthen by work, by example, and by law the faith of the people, to keep them united to the inferior clergy and to themselves, and to bind them to the Shepherd of the shepherds, the Supreme Head of the Church. It is quite fitting, then, that this passage of the Gospel should be read in the Mass of this day, the Mass of Confessors and Bishops, who in guarding the flocks committed to them by the Vicar of Jesus Christ should be patterns of watchfulness.

HOMILY III

Mass of Doctors

I CHARGE thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom: Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables. But be thou vigilant, labor in all things, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. Be sober. For I am even now ready to be sacrificed: and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming.—2 *Tim.* iv. 1–8.

We are directed to read these eight verses of St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy in the Mass of this day, that of Doctors. Verses more appropriate could not have been selected; in them St. Paul urgently exhorts Timothy to discharge his duties as teacher, or as doctor, which means the same, and he points out the way to do this, and also the dangers that are to be carefully avoided.

It is indeed true that the teaching of the great apostle is primarily intended for us who are charged with the sacred ministry of the word, rather than for you of the faithful who listen to it; still it will not be on that account unprofitable to you, since truth is of its very nature beneficial to all, and since what is laid as a duty upon teachers may in a measure be also applicable to those who are taught, just as in reminding parents of their duties we also remind children of theirs, and in impressing upon children their obligations we also indirectly impress upon parents theirs. And now let us begin the explanation.

The second Letter of St. Paul to Timothy, written shortly before St. Paul's death, is wholly devoted to exhortation and advice, such as that great soul, encompassed by distressing difficulties, would be likely to give to his beloved son from the depths of his prison. There is in these exhortations and sentences, so hurried,

concise, and clean-cut a warm glow, a youthful ardor, as of one who is yearning to do good, hastening to say what is near his heart, and wishing to say it in the fewest possible words, for he is longing for the moment when he shall be set free and for the possession of life eternal, of which he feels secure.

"I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming and His kingdom." To show how great and important are the things he is about to say to Timothy, St. Paul appeals to what is of all else the most august and holy and uses a formula the most solemn possible. "I conjure you," he says, "and I call a witness and an avenger of what I am about to say. *I charge thee."* Whom does he call? God, the Lord of all, and His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. "Take heed," the Apostle seems to say; "I call as a witness and avenger Jesus Christ, who will judge all men living and dead, good and bad, who will also judge you, Timothy, and me; who knows all and will render to every man according to his works; and I pray and conjure you by that day when Christ will come in the majesty of His infinite glory, and by that kingdom, which will then be completed and of which Christ is and will be the everlasting king." "And what is it," Timothy seems to ask, "what is it, O greatest of apostles, you would

have me do; what is it you so urgently, ardently pray and implore me to do?" *"Preach the word."* He repeats to Timothy the command of Christ: *"Go, teach all nations, preach to every creature."* Turn his eyes whither he would, St. Paul saw idolatry dominant everywhere, and associated with it every error and a moral degradation so low that lower depth was not possible. Rome, where he was in prison, was the queen of the world; power and glory equal to hers had never been seen before and may never be seen again. And yet in spite of all her greatness, wealth, and splendid civilization she was a slave of the vilest superstitions, the center and breeding place of all corruption. Now what was the means, the only means, by which the light of truth might be made to shine out in this dense darkness of error? What was the weapon, the only weapon, given by Christ to smite this powerful foe? The word of the Gospel. This is why St. Paul, after uttering the emphatic words you have heard, cries out: *"Preach the word;* fearlessly proclaim in a strong voice and everywhere the Gospel of Christ."

My friends, idolatry has disappeared, Paganism is conquered and destroyed, its temples are pulled down, its altars are overturned, but have errors disappeared? Are they destroyed? Alas, what a cloud of prejudices and errors of

all sorts has settled upon our society! It has indeed cast out from its bosom the beliefs and the worship of idolatry, but large portions of it still retain its manners and its morals. It is our duty to keep up the work of the apostles, to combat the errors of this age, and sternly to set our faces against its corrupt morals; and the most effective and speedy means by which to accomplish this work is ever that employed by the apostles and imposed upon them by Christ Himself: "*Preach the word*—announce the Gospel." It has been wisely said that things are preserved by the same means by which they were produced; faith was spread and planted among us by the word, and therefore by the word must it be preserved and its kingdom widened. And we shall go on preaching this regenerating word, but what will come of announcing it if it is not listened to? While it is our duty to announce it, it is your duty to listen to it and heed it.

Preach the word. The Apostle, wholly engrossed with the necessity of preaching the word and dominated by this thought, goes on to say: "*Be instant,* never tire of it." The better to explain the force of the words: "*Preach, be instant,*" he adds: "*in season, out of season.*" And when, asks St. Augustine, is one instant in season? When he preaches to him who gladly listens to him. And when is

one instant out of season? When he who hears him does so unwillingly. Should we, then, announce the teaching of the Gospel to one who wishes not to hear it, whom it wearies and disgusts? Is not this to violate the dictates of prudence? Is it not to transgress the divine precept, which says: *"Where there is no hearing pour not out words."* And again: *"Neither cast ye your pearls before them lest they trample them under their feet"?* St. Paul could not possibly ask Timothy to transgress these divine precepts or to violate the dictates of prudence. I am inclined to believe that the words *"in season, out of season"* refer to Timothy himself, as if St. Paul would say. *"Preach the word, be instant* both when it is convenient to you and when it is not; in this matter do not consider your own ease, but the needs of others." But if these words are to be made applicable, not to the preacher, but to the hearer, they may be taken to mean that the Apostle wished to impress upon Timothy the necessity of being insistent in preaching and of using every possible means to bring the words of truth home to the minds of the most intractable, just as we animate others to do what we have very much at heart when we say: "Leave nothing undone; succeed, if not by one means, then by another; if not by love, then by compulsion." By such expressions we do not mean

to imply that we have any intention of using force or even of being annoying or importunate; we simply wish to signify how desirous we are to succeed in attaining our object. The words "*out of season*" may also be joined to the phrase "*in all patience,*" that is, in all charity. Where there is charity, everything is seasonable and nothing comes amiss or is importunate, since charity or love renders all things easy and agreeable.

The Apostle goes on in his impetuous and eloquent way, adding: "*Reprove,*" that is, *convince,* or as the Latin has it: "*Argue.*" The intellect ought to be the guide of the heart, as truth is the guide of the intellect, being to it what light is to the eye. How does the intellect apprehend truth? How does it cast out error, if perchance error has entered it, or presents itself to it? By reason, or by arguments drawn from reason, if there is question of natural truths, and by faith, if there is question of the truths of faith. To gain the will the intellect must first be subdued, and to subdue the intellect recourse must be had to argument. "To fancy," says St. Chrysostom, "that the intellect will surrender without good reasons is to act rashly, and to do what no one will put up with."[1] A general, who sets about taking

[1] "Si absque argumentis aliquem increpes, temarius esse videberis, nullusque te perferet."

a fortress, sees to it that he has the proper arms; so also must he who wishes to subdue the intellect provide himself with good reasons and use them. And this is what those did, from the days of the apostles to our own, who set themselves to convert pagans, heretics, schismatics, and unbelievers of every kind. They did not give offence, or threaten, or speak angrily, or preach long sermons; but they presented the truth concisely and clearly, thus illuminating the minds of their hearers, subduing them, and with the minds the hearts also: *Argue.*

The Apostle still pursues the same thought: "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, convince, *entreat, rebuke.*" It would seem that the Apostle wished to soften the force of the strong expressions already used, and hence he joins prayer to argument, and most ardent prayer, saying: *"I entreat."* How often and often do St. Peter and St. Paul in their Letters, as if losing sight of their high dignity, pray and beseech their children to welcome the words of truth. The nature of men differs, and so also do their tastes, aptitudes, and tendencies. In the case of cold, sluggish, indolent, and vulgar souls, strong words and rebukes, sometimes harsh and often repeated, and peremptory commands, are required to rouse and convince them, and to lead them on to the truth; whereas in the case of ardent, energetic, noble, and re-

fined natures, gentle and kind methods, prayer, and words breathing sympathy and good will are more effective. A practical knowledge of men, of time and place, will teach which of many methods it is wisest to adopt to gain the desired end. This is why the Apostle points out various methods, saying: *"Be instant in season, out of season, reprove,"* that is, convince, *"entreat, rebuke."* The word *"rebuke"* seems a little harsh and hazardous to the Apostle and he at once sets about to soften its meaning, saying: *"In all patience and doctrine."* Be instant, convince, entreat, rebuke, but never forget to be patient and charitable, to practise *longanimity,* which is the patience that never tires, is ever the same, and never gives way to anger. St. Paul has elsewhere felicitously expressed this truth, where he bids us, "if a man be overtaken in any fault to instruct him in the spirit of meekness."[1] Who are the ignorant and erring? They are those who are sick in mind and heart. What should we say of a physician who would deal harshly with his patients, and having discovered their maladies and wounds go on aggravating and irritating them? We should say that he was cruel and call in another physician. Why, then, should we deal rudely with and speak harshly to those sick in soul? We ministers of the word should keep in

[1] Gal. vi. 1.

mind those beautiful words of St. Paul: *"Reprove in all patience,* for he who is converted by kindness will respect him who converts him; but if he is offended by harsh language and biting reproof, he will not receive the reproof and will not be saved."[1] The Apostle in his advice to Timothy couples longanimity and doctrine: *In all patience and doctrine. Patience without doctrine will not enlighten the minds of men;* and doctrine without patience will repel the erring and be wholly useless.

Having in a single verse laid down for Timothy the rules he should observe in preaching the word of God, he goes on to give the reason for having done so, a reason which, while having great force in his time and later on, has immeasurably greater force at the present day. He says: *"For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, according to their own desires, they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears."* He tells Timothy that in announcing the Gospel he should, as regards such men, also follow the rules laid down for him, since there will arise those who, instead of receiving sound and true doctrine, will repel it and spurn it. He alludes to heretics who, before many years had gone

[1] "Argue . . . in omni patientia; quia leviter castigatus exhibet reverentiam castiganti; asperitate autem nimia et increpatione offensus, neque increpationem recipit, neque salutem."

by, created all sorts of disorders in the Church by their extravagances and sophisms. Instead of accepting the doctrine of Christ in its simplicity, as proposed by the Church, they wished to know the wherefore for everything; they would investigate what they ought humbly and meekly to believe; they raised difficulties everywhere and multiplied useless and dangerous questions; in this respect they were as heretics have been in every age, and to this history bears witness. And are these restless souls, who will not submit to the truth, wanting in our own time and in our very midst? Alas how many are there among us who are annoyed at the truth, who care nothing for it or who openly repel it! They follow their own wicked cravings: *According to their own desire;* they turn their backs upon the Church, the infallible teacher; they run after every novelty, they listen to every teacher: *They heap to themselves teachers.* They disdain to listen to priest or bishop, or even to the Pope himself, and they hang upon the lips of a professor, who denies God, scoffs at the existence of a soul, asserts that man is evolved from a monkey, that he is not free, and that there is no difference between good and evil, not to mention other learned absurdities. They will not listen to the Church, who has been teaching for so many centuries, and yet they become docile disciples of writers of yesterday,

of reckless journalists, of romancers, of those who question turning-tables and spirits, of mesmerists, and of others of the same breed. When speaking of the Church they arrogantly boast that they are free-thinkers; they tell us they will have no teachers, and forthwith they proceed to create them without number; and they take as their guides every newspaper they read and every man with whom they converse. This is the just chastisement of those who will not submit to the teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ; unconsciously they become the disciples of despicable teachers, who go about scattering lies and disseminating superstitions. And whence this blindness? Why are those, who so stubbornly and rancorously oppose the teachings of the Church, so ready to accept the most ridiculous superstitions and the most incredible fables of their new masters? Because these are adepts in the art of tickling the ears and flattering the passions: *"Having itching ears."* Isaias tells us what those unfortunate persons say that love to be deceived and ask for teachers after their own heart, who will flatter the senses: *"Not for us those things that are right; speak unto us pleasant things."* And this is what we see with our very eyes. It is a trial and an annoyance to such persons to listen to an explanation of the Gospel and of the Catechism; they will not heed one who speaks to

them of humility and obedience, of modesty, purity, and temperance, of the judgments of God and of hell, because all this terrifies and appals them. Instead they go off to listen to lectures that are at once irreligious and anarchistic; they are frequenters of opera houses and comic theaters, where morality has much to lose and nothing to gain; they take part in profane amusements of every sort, in balls and entertainments, concerning which very often the less said the better. How true, alas, even in our own day are the words of the Apostle: *"They heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears"*—those who will tickle their ears and say what pleases. Is it to be wondered at, then, that we are witnesses of the evils deplored by St. Paul; that we see men turning from the truth and running after fables? *"They will turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables."*

We know from observation that certain men, addicted to highly flavored dishes and intoxicating drinks, little by little vitiate their sense of taste, and can no longer relish or endure other meats and drinks, even the most choice and delicate. The same is true of those men to whom St. Paul refers; they are like the Hebrews in the desert, who loathed the manna and longed for the fleshpots of Egypt; it annoys them to listen to the most beautiful and precious

truths of faith; they are longing for fables, they love error, and plunge headlong into the filth of every uncleanness and there find their joy and delight.

The Apostle now turning to Timothy addresses him directly, saying: *"But be thou vigilant, labor in all things."* Watchfulness is necessary to all of us, collectively and singly, if we will not be taken unawares by the enemy; but how much more necessary is it for him, who must answer, not only for himself, but for others, whose appointed teacher and guide he is. If the general is not watchful, what will become of the army? Now Timothy was a bishop, and therefore the teacher and guide of the Church committed to him by the Apostle; and if he should be always vigilant, how much more vigilant should he be in the presence of the dangers, snares, and errors, which, as St. Paul warned him, were near at hand. Hence this exhortation, *Be thou vigilant,* which is a natural consequence of what the Apostle had said in the two preceding verses. "Watch over yourself, watch over those entrusted to you," St. Paul cries, "for of them you will have to give an account;" but watchfulness implies toil of body, distress of soul, sometimes loss and danger, and in those times, especially, risk of life itself. "No matter," says St. Paul, "do your duty, watch, if it must be, suffer loss and

even life itself; fear not, do not hesitate: *Labor in all things.''* The enemies of the faith, the teachers of error, the sowers of falsehood never tire; they scatter the evil seed everywhere, corrupt sound doctrine and lead souls astray. What means do they mainly employ? They do the work by word and example. Well and good; to their words of error oppose the word of truth, to their life of scandal oppose a life without blemish: *Do the work of an evangelist,* not by writing, but by preaching the Gospel, that is, the teachings of the Gospel, preach them by word of mouth and by conduct becoming a bishop.

Truth, like error, is propagated in many ways; it is propagated by writings and by books, but more than all it is propagated by word of mouth and by works. All can not read, but all can hear the word and see the works you do, and works are more effective than words. We ministers of Jesus Christ and continuators of the apostolic office are in duty bound to announce the truth by word of mouth: *Do the work of an evangelist;* and to confirm it by works and by a spotless and holy life; and woe to us if we come short of our mission, as the Apostle says: *''Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.''* And you of the laity can and ought to aid us in the discharge of this high office; you can aid us by speaking a word at

the proper place and time to friends and acquaintances, in company and in private, at home and abroad; but you can aid us still more effectually by living lives becoming Christians, thus combating error, spreading the truth, and in a measure exercising the office of an apostle: *"Do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry."*

How was the Christian faith propagated in the first ages among the people, how did it find its way into families and into a society pagan to the core? Origen tells us; he lived in the very heart of that society, in Alexandria, one of the great centers of Paganism. That wonderful man tells us that they, who spread the light of Christian truth in families and in all that pagan society by their humble words and still more by their spotless morals, were poor women of the lower class, washer-women, wool-carders, weavers, laborers, and artisans. By their conduct was the good seed insensibly sown; it took root in families and a divine life began to leaven the whole of society and to undermine Paganism, which flitted away before the mighty breath of the new faith. Why can not you do in society as it is to-day what the first Christians did in the family and in the society of their day? This is your apostolate, this your ministry: *Fulfil thy ministry.*

As I said above, St. Paul in this last chapter of his last Letter, written while his eyes were fixed on the sword of the executioner flashing above his head, heaps together admonitions and condenses phrases with more than his usual haste and brevity. An example of this are these words: *Be sober.*[1] This admonition is naturally coupled with that of being watchful and of fulfilling his ministry, since without temperance, or a just mean in all things it is impossible to be watchful or to adequately discharge all one's duties. Temperance in eating and drinking, in labor and rest, establishes an equilibrium of the forces and makes hard and prolonged labor possible.

Thus far the Apostle thinks only of Timothy and addresses himself to him. Suddenly turning his eyes upon himself, he speaks of himself as effusively and as tenderly as might a father who is about to take leave for good and all of a dearly beloved son. The transition is quite natural. "It may be," he seems to say, "that you, Timothy, will wonder at these my earnest admonitions. That I clearly understand. But remember they are my last, for my blood is

[1] There is a well-founded opinion among interpreters, including A Lapide, that the words *Be sober* have been inserted by a copyist. They are not found in the Greek text. I follow the *Vulgate* and retain them, as I do not deal here with a critical and hermeneutical question, which is moreover in itself of no practical importance.

already offered up and the hour of my taking off is imminent: *For I am even now ready to be sacrificed, and the time of my dissolution is at hand.*" We learn from the Book of Leviticus that wine was offered together with the immolated victims, and that all the wine was poured out. This was called a libation. Now St. Paul in saying: "*I am even now ready to be sacrificed,*" meant that, as the wine was poured out and formed part of the sacrifice, so would his blood be poured out in the martyrdom which he saw he was soon about to undergo. In other words, he meant that his sacrifice was very near at hand, and very near at hand also was the moment in which his soul would be loosed from the fetters of the body: "*The time of my dissolution is at hand.*" What is death? It is the separation of the soul from the body, very well expressed by the word "dissolution"—not destruction.

In fixing his thought upon the close of his days and upon the martyrdom that awaited him, the Apostle could not help casting a glance back upon the events of his life, just as one nearing the summit of a mountain turns to take a look at the path he has traversed. St. Paul surveyed his tempestuous life, the struggles he had sustained, his apostolic mission of above thirty years in the East and in the West, his bearing before kings and people, the suffer-

ings he endured for love of Jesus Christ, the countless souls he had brought to see the light of faith, and bearing within him the testimony of a good conscience, which gave him confidence and reliant hope, he cried out: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith."* Among the public games of Greece there were two especially famous, that of the runners and that of the boxers, and to these St. Paul makes reference more than once; the champions in these contests became celebrated and their names were on every tongue. St. Paul in saying: *"I have fought the good fight,"* as is clear, refers to the Olympic games or to the contests of the boxers; and in saying: *"I have finished my course,"* he refers to the contests on the race course, and by naming both he represents his whole apostolic life and the reward which God had in store for him. *"I have kept the Faith,* I have continued loyal to the banner of Christ, just as a soldier is loyal to the banner of his country and king; neither promises nor threats, neither joys nor sorrows, neither honor nor shame, neither kings nor peoples, neither Jews nor pagans, neither philosophers nor prisons, neither exile nor anything whatsoever on this earth, could tear me from my Jesus: *I have kept the Faith.* I rejoice in it, I glory in it. And what more remains to me here below? I see the end of

my labor and toil, I see the crown prepared for me, I see heaven opened, I long and yearn to enter there, I am impatient to go out from this long and bitter exile." All this the Apostle implies in the words: *"As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day.* Now," St. Paul seems to say, "my eyes are fixed on that *crown of justice,* or on the reward that is in justice due me." Is God, then, obliged in justice to give us everlasting life? How can a creature, who has nothing and has received and is receiving everything, set up his rights as those of justice as regards God, who can not be a debtor to any one? A creature, no matter who, can have no rights, either in the natural order or in the supernatural, as regards God; but if God of His sole goodness and bounty has promised grace to a creature and eternal goods corresponding to the grace, He is bound to give them, and should He refuse, He would be wanting in justice. St. Paul, then, rightly calls everlasting life a crown of *justice,* due to him by the just Judge, which the Judge will certainly give him *in that day,* namely, the day of supreme justice when time will be no more. St. Augustine says that, properly speaking, God has made Himself a debtor, not only to Himself by the promises He has given, but toward Jesus Christ, who ran-

somed us, and also toward us, and hence we say to Him: "Give what Thou hast promised us, because we have done what Thou hast commanded." [1]

And bear in mind, St. Paul goes on, this crown of justice will be given not only to me, an apostle, but to as many as by faith and works will have shown that they haved loved Christ, have desired His coming, and have been His true disciples.

My friends, I have only one wish both for myself and for you who listen to me, namely, that when the sun of our days is setting we may be able with humble trust to repeat the words of the great apostle: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day."*

[1] "Debitorem se fecit non tantum sibi, sed et Christo et nobis, ut illi dicere possimus: Redde quod promisisti, quia fecimus quod jusisti." (Ser. xvi, De verbis Dom.)

HOMILY IV

Mass of Doctors

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men. You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain can not be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the Law, till all be fulfilled. He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.—*Matt.* v. 13–19.

On this day the Church celebrates the memory of a distinguished Doctor, whose name has been and is still glorious in the writings which he has left us, and which are replete with deepest wisdom. Of him it can be truly said that, though dead, he still speaks and teaches, speaks and teaches not alone as all other saints do, by the example of his luminous virtues, but by his valuable writings, which will be read as long as the world lasts. The words I have read to you are the Gospel of the Mass of this day, and on these the Church bids us meditate. They admirably reflect the life and works of the holy Doctor whom we honor, and who truly is the salt and light of men, a light shining in the midst of darkness, a city set upon the top of a mountain and visible to all, a teacher of the law of God, now great in the kingdom of heaven. Let us put aside the exordium and go at once to the explanation of the Gospel.

As you know, the divine Master begins His famous discourse, known as the Sermon on the Mount, with the beatitudes, which are, if I may so say, the *proclamation* or the *constitution* of His new *kingdom* and the most defiant challenge that was ever flung in the face of the world; the opposition between Christ and His disciples on the one hand and on the other the world and its followers could not be more unmistakable and decisive.

When He had finished the beatitudes, Jesus, addressing Himself to His apostles, as is clear from the context, continues thus: *"You are the salt of the earth."* It is not necessary to note here that the word "earth" does not mean the material earth on which we live, but the men who dwell on it.

Jesus Christ likens the apostles, and hence the Church, not to gold or gems, to diamonds or rubies, but to salt. It must be said, then, that between the apostles and their office and salt there is some similarity or analogy. Let us see what this similarity is and in finding it we shall take the Fathers as our guides. Some one has said that salt is the balsam of the earth; it is a symbol for knowledge and wisdom, and hence a dolt or dull man is said to be silly, or without salt or savor. Salt seasons food and makes it palatable and easy to digest; it stimulates and sharpens the appetite and preserves from corruption. These are the principal qualities of salt and so also should they be of the apostles and of those who continue their work of teaching the people. The apostles and those who continue their divine mission of saving souls by teaching the doctrines of Christ, of which they are the heralds, that is, bishops and priests, ought to possess the qualities of salt. Their words ought, as St. Paul says, to be seasoned with the salt of sa-

cred knowledge,[1] which makes religion acceptable and agreeable, penetrates minds and hearts, preserves morals from the corruption of vice, converts, improves, and sanctifies men. In fact, that which salt effects, when scattered over the meat and dissolved in the food with which we nourish ourselves, bishops and priests ought to effect in men by making the salt of the wisdom of Christ enter into and permeate their souls. To save the world from corruption, there is no other means; if there were Jesus Christ would have taught us what it is. Let us priests enter into ourselves for a little while and examine if we have been, and are now, such as Jesus Christ would have us be, the salt of the earth: *"You are the salt of the earth."* And you of the laity also examine yourselves and see if you have always been, and are now, desirous of receiving the salt of true wisdom, for it is not enough for us to hand it to you; you must be willing to receive it.

Jesus Christ goes on to draw out still more fully the meaning of the similitude, saying: *"But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"* We have only salt wherewith to salt food, and if this lose its virtue, how shall we be able to supply it? With what other

[1] Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt.—*Col.* iv. 6.

salt shall we be able to give to salt its virtue? Such can not be found. And if not what will the salt be worth? It will be worthless and fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot by men. As a vine that does not produce fruit is worthless, so salt, that will not salt, is good for nothing else and it only remains to cast it out and be rid of it.

What terrible words are these for us priests! If we do not fulfil our duties; if we do not according to our strength and opportunity with the salt of the Gospel teaching preserve the people from error and vice; if we do not bring them to love virtue; if we cease to be the salt of the earth; what will become of the souls committed to us? What will become of us? The people will be miserably lost and we priests shall be cast out as useless things and trodden under foot by those who pass by; that is, we shall be spurned and despised even by worldlings. And is not this what takes place? Say that a priest lives heedless of his duties, that he departs from the straight way, takes up the maxims of the world, studies to court its favor, and both in word and deed ceases to be the salt of the earth; the very worldlings scoff at him and scorn him, and he thus verifies the words of Christ: *"Salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men."*

This familiar similitude is followed by another equally familiar and still clearer. How admirable is the art of the divine Master, which all we priests, following His example, should learn. Jesus Christ, infinite wisdom itself, uses the most simple terms and the most familiar images in announcing the most exalted truths and bringing them home to the minds of His hearers. Never does he use a word above their capacity, or a form of speech that is obscure, or a similitude that is novel or strange, or a studied expression; everything is plain, familiar, simple. Jesus Christ makes Himself a man of the people, who converses as do the people; and the difference between Him and His hearers is not a difference of speech, which is common to all, but a difference in the truths He teaches, for these are divine.

He follows up the similitude of salt with the similitude of light: "*You,* My apostles, *are the light of the world,*" that is, of men. Elsewhere Jesus Christ calls Himself "*the light of the world,*" and St. John calls God Himself light: "*God is light.*" As light diffuses itself with the utmost rapidity and, while continuing to be one in itself, is wholly everywhere and produces an infinity of colors; so God is everywhere, and being one in Himself and most simple, produces a countless variety of objects; as light is everywhere and is never defiled, so God

is everywhere and contracts none of the imperfections of objects, nor is He tainted by their uncleanness; as light can not be imprisoned, nor separated, nor touched, nor tarnished, so also God is not altered, nor limited, nor divided, nor touched; as light warms, illuminates, and makes all things fertile, so God enlightens all minds, warms all hearts, and makes all wills prolific. If God is light, the light of the intellect, light full of love, so is Jesus Christ in His humanity light, or rather He is a lamp: *"The Lamb is the lamp thereof,"* because His most sacred humanity has not light of itself, but receives it from the Person of the Word, which possesses it and makes it His own; and the apostles, bishops, and priests are and ought to be the light of the world; they are lamps lighted at the lamp of Christ, at the indefectible light of God Himself, and they ought by word and example to light the way of truth, the way that leads to heaven: *"You are the light of the world."* We ought to be as light to enlighten all men without participating of their errors; we ought while living in the midst of men to lift them up even to God; we ought to diffuse nothing but light, light without a shadow of darkness, thus resembling God, of whom it is said: *"God is light and in Him there is no darkness."*

The apostles, and by consequence the entire

priesthood and the Church, are likened by Christ first to salt, next to light; and then follows a third figure: *"A city seated on a mountain can not be hid."* Note a city seated on the side of a mountain, or on its summit; you can see it from afar, you can distinguish its towers, palaces, and streets; it is as a lighthouse that securely guides you. So also the Church, or the priesthood, which makes the Church more visible. If you look at a city from a distance, your eyes are fixed especially upon the towers, palaces, and great edifices that stand out prominently above the other buildings; so, also, are the eyes of the people fixed, and rightly so, upon those in the Church, who hold the highest positions; these they study, these they closely observe and detect their good qualities and their bad, and by these they judge the city itself. It is, therefore, highly necessary and becoming that we priests, placed in high positions, should exhibit in ourselves a pattern of every virtue; and it will be an evil day for us, if we, being set above you of the laity in virtue of the sacred authority we wield, are but equal to you, or worse, inferior to you in learning and holiness of life.

And here follows a fourth similitude, which in fact is implied in those already given: *"You are the light of the world."* Our divine Saviour says that a lamp is not lighted to be

put under a bushel but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all in the house. A lamp is lighted for the convenience of those who are in the house, or who come in or go out, and hence it is not to be covered or put under a vessel, but to be set upon a candlestick and in an elevated place.[1] What does Jesus Christ wish to teach by this lamp set in a high place? He wishes to drive home the same truth He has been insisting on; He admonishes and commands the apostles, and all those who will take up and in various ways continue His work, to preach fearlessly, openly to all, without regard of persons, the truths He taught. He tells them that the world is shrouded in darkness, covered with the pall of densest night, that He is the Light, and that they are lamps lighted by Him to dissipate this darkness. "What," He says, "will become of the world if you cover these lamps, that is, if you do not speak out and announce the truth, if you conceal it from those who are in need of it?" "He puts his lamp under a bushel," says St. Augustine, "who from motives of temporal interest or worldly considerations obscures and hides the light of true doctrine."[2] We priests, each in

[1] The bushel was a vessel for measuring grain and the like and was also used to cover a lamp.

[2] "Sub modio lucernam ponit quisquis lucem bonae doctrinae commodis temporalibus obscurat et tegit." (Apud A Lapide.)

his own rank and office, should always keep the lamp of truth lighted and raised on high in the House of God, or in the Church, so that those outside may be able to enter in, and those within may remain there and walk in the straight way that leads to salvation. Each of us should be a Baptist of whom Our Lord said: *"He was a burning and a shining light";* burning, by his works of charity, shining, by his words of truth.

In the next verse, which is, so to say, a summing up of all He had said, Jesus Christ explains what sort of light each of us should be: *"So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is in heaven."* He seems to say: "O My apostles, O ye My ministers, who will live in the centuries yet to come, no matter in what part of the world, never forget this, that you are and must be the light of the world; you must be lights set upon candlesticks; your light, that is the truth, must shine in word, but more than all it must shine in deed, which is the manifestation of the truth. Let your life and conduct be your most efficient preaching, and men seeing your holy deeds will be led to recognize that your doctrine also is holy, and will embrace and follow it and so give glory to God. This is the meaning of the words of Jesus Christ. He means that the holiness of His ministers

shall be the proof of the doctrine they preach. Note how our divine Master goes back again and again to this truth, and with reason, for it is a point of pre-eminent importance.

But, my friends, do not for a moment fancy that these words are addressed solely to us ministers of the sanctuary; in due measure they are addressed also to you of the laity. The Christian faith is a heritage common to priests and laymen, to us and to you who listen to me; we should all appreciate its worth and regard it as our most precious treasure; we should all indeed desire and strive, each according to his ability and opportunity, not only to preserve it among ourselves, but to spread it abroad, propagate it everywhere, and have it held in highest honor. You of the laity also in a way participate of the divine priesthood, you also have your own Christian apostolate. You live in the midst of the world and of society, and you necessarily come in contact with all classes of people much more frequently than do we priests. How often have you an opportunity of associating with persons who are wholly indifferent to religion! How often do you find yourselves in the company of persons who doubt of all religion, who have abandoned it, who spurn it and blaspheme it, or who know nothing of it! If your conduct is such as befits and becomes a true Christian; if your

works are a practical illustration of the teachings of the Gospel; if these erring brethren find you just, upright, honest, chaste, humble, charitable, temperate, in a word, virtuous, they will learn to esteem the religion that made you such; they will appreciate its greatness and efficacy, and little by little they will be disposed to embrace it, and you will be the apostles of their conversion. Let them see, aye, let them see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven! How many sceptical and unbelieving friends did that pious and princely soul, Frederic Ozanam, a professor at the University of Paris, reconcile to the Church and bring back to the Faith! Dr. Hirtz from being a Protestant became an unbeliever; he was a highly educated man and passionately devoted to the sciences; being thoroughly honest he sought only to know the truth; from Germany he crossed over into France and went from university to university without finding what he so ardently desired. He was providentially introduced into the bosom of a Catholic family, the members of which united to a frank profession of the Catholic faith the practice of the most exalted Christian virtues. Ignorant of the fact that he had been a Protestant and was then an unbeliever, they received him with loving kindness. He was so touched on witnessing the exemplary and irreproachable lives of

this Catholic family and their thoughtful consideration for himself, that one by one his prejudices were dispelled, his errors vanished, the light of truth found its way into his mind, and at the end of a year he embraced the Faith and entered upon a life of the highest Christian perfection. Thus in a Christian family, which united to a profession of the Christian faith its perfect practice, and which with considerate delicacy abstained entirely from discussing religion with him, did Dr. Hirtz gain a knowledge of the truth which he had sought in vain in hundreds of books and scores of universities. Exemplary lives accomplished what long study had failed to accomplish, and produced an effect which the most subtle and profound reasoning could never have produced.[1]

Our Saviour bids us *let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.* We should not fancy for a moment that Jesus Christ would have us practise virtue with a view of its becoming known to men, and we in consequence be honored and praised by them; this would be not only a childish vanity but a violation of Christ's precept, who says: "Let not your left hand know what your right hand does." And again: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them"; no, He

[1] Life of Dr. Hirtz.

would have us do good before others simply and solely for the sake of doing good, pleasing God and sanctifying our souls, but not with a view of gaining their praise. Good works, without our seeking it or willing it, will speak of themselves and will make the truth known. Certainly it is not wrong to do good works and give good example, even when we do so that these may be known of men, and that they in consequence may give glory to God; still the practice is perilous and the prudent will avoid it. Let us live holily and endeavor to conceal our good works and to do them only for love of God, to whom we should look for their reward; if they should become known (and they will sooner or later, for who can wholly hide the light?) and if they are edifying to the faithful and give honor to God, let us rejoice.[1]

"Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." On the coming of the Messias and through Him the Hebrew people looked forward to a profound upheaval; He was to free the people from the yoke of the stranger,

[1] "Qualiter videnda sunt (opera bona) vel qualiter non videnda, ex sententiarum fine monstravit (Christus), quatenus operantis mens opus suum et propter se videri non quaereret, et qui tamen propter coelestis Patris gloriam hoc non celaret." (S. Greg. M., lib. iii, Pastor., 36.) In other words Jesus Christ commands us both to conceal and to manifest good works. How can this be done? By concealing them from ourselves and making them known to God.

to improve the material interests of the nation, to subject to it all its enemies, and to transform, how they knew not, the Mosaic Law. Christ combated this prejudice of the Hebrew nation by reminding them of the real scope of the mission of the Messias. The Law of Moses and of the prophets consisted of four parts, namely, the *dogmatic,* the *moral,* the *figurative* or *prophetical,* and the *ceremonial* and *judicial.* Of these the *dogmatic* and *moral* parts were the principal, and these Christ did not, and could not abrogate; He only elevated and perfected them. The idea of God and of His perfections and providence, and the natural precepts contained in the Decalogue were in substance unchangeable, and Christ did no more than elucidate and perfect what the Law and the prophets had taught; similarly the *prophetical* and *figurative* parts, that is, whatever the prophets of the Old Law had foretold concerning the Messias, or the figures had foreshadowed, were to be fulfilled in Christ and in His Church. As regards the *ceremonial* and *judicial* parts, that is, the *religious rites,* and judicial prescriptions, whether *hygienic, penal, ceremonial, political* or *civil* (which also found a place in the Mosaic Law), all these Christ abrogated [1] as had been foretold by the prophets,

[1] In a sense it may be said that Christ, instead of abrogating, fulfilled the ceremonial and judicial law, since personally

and hence to abrogate the Law was to fulfil it.

Having spoken of the Mosaic Law and made clear His mission in regard to it, which was to perfect, and not to abolish it, Jesus Christ most solemnly and energetically insists on the necessity of observing it: *"Amen I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the Law, till all be fulfilled."* This is given still more clearly in another part of the Gospel where it is said that heaven and earth shall not pass, and neither shall the end of the world come, until this Law shall sooner or later be fulfilled even in its least part.[1] Jesus could not have more clearly and precisely made known His mind in regard to the Law, or to the reverence due it, or to His own mission, and this was necessary in order to remove any suspicion that He was hostile to it, as some had commenced to whisper that He was.

And still further to drive home the same truth He goes on: *"He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but he that shall do and*

He observed it, and since its cessation was in reality its fulfilment, this having been foretold.

[1] Many things in the Law and the prophets were fulfilled after Christ, and some will be fulfilled only before the end of the world. The letter *jota* was the smallest of the Hebrew letters; the points did not exist at the time of Christ, having been introduced later. "Jot" or "point" here means the smallest particle of the Law; all the Law then will be observed.

teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The sense of this passage, which is seemingly a little obscure, is undoubtedly this. "So absolutely true are the words I have spoken to you, namely, that the Law must be observed in every detail, that I declare openly that whosoever shall violate a single one of these precepts, weighty in themselves, though some may hold and affirm that they are of trifling importance, and shall dare teach others to violate it, as do the Scribes and Pharisees, shall be called the *least* in the kingdom of heaven; and that whosoever shall observe the Law and teach others to observe it, shall have a high place in heaven."[1] Here it would seem that Jesus Christ especially insists on the greater reward that those will have who, besides observing the Law, which we are all obliged to obey, shall also teach others to observe it; and this twofold duty is incumbent not alone upon us priests because of our office of ministry, but also upon you of the laity by reason of the good example you should give.

[1] In this place Christ, by adding to the words *do the law*, the words *teach the law*, this being the office of a master or teacher, evidently alludes to the Scribes and Pharisees. It is notorious that they considered it a serious fault to heal the sick or to pluck a few ears of corn on the Sabbath, or not to wash the hands before eating, and the like; while they considered it no fault at all to revile, slander, calumniate, and even to kill; they made much of trifles and wholly disregarded the great precepts. He was covertly pointing to them.

HOMILY V

Mass of a Confessor not a Bishop

Os Justi, etc.

Blessed is the man that is found without spot, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he? and we will praise him: for he hath done wonderful things in his life. Who hath been tried thereby, and made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting. He that could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; could do evil things, and hath not done them; therefore are his good deeds established in the Lord, and all the church of the saints shall declare his alms.—*Ecclus.* xxxi. 8–12.

These few but fertile sentences, which the Church directs to be read in the Mass of this day, that namely of a Confessor not a Bishop, are found in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, and admirably harmonize with the life of the saint whom we honor.

The larger part of this Book treats mainly of moral subjects and contains precepts and

instructions, the teaching of which is as clear and simple as it is profound and important. After speaking in the preceding chapter of the necessity of bringing up sons properly, and after showing the danger of being over-indulgent, the writer gives a warning against the evil effects of sadness and pensiveness and describes the beneficial effects of being always cheerful and virtuous. He then goes on to show the vexations of the avaricious, and to extol the advantages and sing the praises of the man who is not a slave to gold. And here begins our commentary which I trust you will find neither tiresome nor useless.

"Blessed is the man that is found without blemish." In the Book of Ecclesiasticus the passage runs not, *Blessed is the man,* but, *Blessed is the rich man,* for the writer is speaking of a rich man who is just and upright. The rich man is blessed, not because he is rich, but because he is without fault. The rich and covetous man of the world finds all his happiness in the gold he has locked up in his strong box, in his holdings and property, and in the splendid and luxurious home in which he dwells. But what sort of happiness is his? Were his property and money a hundred-fold greater than they really are, could they ever satisfy him and make him really happy? Alas, my friends, riches are thorns that goad and sting you

before you acquire them; they goad and sting you after you have gotten possession of them, for you fear to lose them, you are worried in trying to preserve them, and you have a feverish longing to increase them; and they goad and sting you at the hour of death, when they will be snatched from you. Riches in themselves and as such have never made a single man happy; they have made many unhappy; they have been a worry to many during life, and they have afflicted and tormented all who, disillusioned at the hour of death, must, whether they will or not, part with them for good and all. Riches are a kind of goods that make a man happy only in the measure in which he knows how and when to divest himself of them and to keep himself free from loving them inordinately. Riches are a very strange boon. They honor the man who possesses them when he parts with them or gives them up for the benefit of others; and they dishonor him and make him contemptible and despicable when he accumulates them and hoards them for himself.

The inspired writer does not stop here; he goes on singing the praises of the rich man who leads a blameless life, saying: *"And that hath not gone after gold."* The body runs with material strides after those things that gratify the senses; so also the soul runs after those things that give it pleasure; but how? By what

means? By the means that are proper to it, by thought and affection. Do you love anything, any person whomsoever, whether near or far away? What do you do when you so love? You follow him whithersoever he goes, you follow him in thought and affection; should he go hundreds and thousands of miles away, you, too, are there with him, almost unconsciously you are there in thought and affection; you see him, listen to him, speak to him, converse with him. If you have your heart set on riches you pursue them with mind and heart, as a servant follows his master, as a shadow follows a body. Now tell me, any of you, are you greater or less than gold, even a mountain of it? I think there will not be found on this earth any one so stupid and degraded as to say: "Gold is more than men"; and if there should be found any one who would say so, we should not care to argue with him. Even one single man is worth more than all the gold of the world. Now answer me: Should the more noble being and the more excellent follow the less noble and the less excellent, or should the latter follow the former? Assuredly it is fitting that the inferior should go in search of the superior, and hence the servant follows the master, the shadow the body, and the earth the sun. Hence gold should seek you and not you gold. Would you degrade yourself and become the servant of a bit of

lifeless metal, a piece of lustrous matter, that is the work of your hands? And yet this is what the covetous man does, what all do who toilsomely labor to acquire gold and end by becoming its slaves. Where shall we find men who, mindful of their dignity and of the exalted end for which they are destined, look with indifference upon wealth and are ready at once to part with it rather than offend God?

Three things are required in order that a rich man may be said to be blessed: first, that he shall not sin in possessing it; next, that he shall not give himself to the pursuit of it; and of these two we have already said all that is needful; the third is: *"He shall not put his trust in money or in treasures."* One who is wealthy may easily come to believe that he can do anything with money, that he can overcome his competitors, that he can rise in the world and gain all honors; that he need have no fear of the evils of this life; that he may enjoy everything that is good and be sufficient unto himself. "I am rich," he says, "and I have need of nothing"; and little by little he comes to forget that there is a God above him. He puts his hope not in God, but in his riches and accumulated treasures, and like the glutton in the Gospel he says: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest; eat, drink, make good cheer." The man, however, who possesses

an abundance of riches and is wise enough to lift his soul above them, to fix his thoughts on God, and to center all his hope in Him, is a man of good sense and merits by reason of his exceedingly rare virtue to be called blessed: *"Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money, nor in treasure."*

A rich man who possesses these three qualities, or virtues, is so exceedingly rare that the sacred writer, regarding him as a marvel, cries out: *"Who is he, and we will praise him."* And why should he be especially singled out for praise? *"Because he has done wonderful things in his life";* or because his life, being innocent, holy, and entirely given to God, is one of the greatest miracles that it is possible to conceive.

Is it not a miracle to behold a man, who in the midst of riches, which of themselves feed pride, and incite to arrogance, anger, incontinency, gluttony, sloth, and all the passions, lives a modest, humble, patient, chaste, temperate, and toilsome life, luminous with every virtue? Is it not a miracle to behold nearly all men thirsty for wealth and rushing breathlessly in pursuit of it, and to behold him who possesses it in abundance care nothing for it? Is it not a miracle to behold a very wealthy man who loves God alone, puts his trust in Him alone,

and is lavish of his riches in the works of God, in building and beautifying His temples and in sustaining His poor? Is not martyrdom a miracle of fortitude of soul? St. Bernard says that a rich man who does not love his riches is in a sense a martyr. "Behold him," he says; "he is temperate in the midst of the choicest food, chaste in the midst of luxury, poor in the midst of wealth;" and hence has Christ promised equally both to the poor in spirit, and to those who mourn and suffer for His sake, the kingdom of heaven.

Let us go on with the text. "*Who hath been tried thereby* (by gold) *and made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting.*" There is no recompense without labor, no prize without a test, no triumph without a struggle and a victory; but the character of labor is diverse, and so also is the character of the test and the struggle. One man is healthy and robust and must be tried by labor and fatigue; another is unhealthy and must be tried by suffering and patience; another gifted with splendid talents and must be tried by his knowledge; another is poor and must be tried by poverty; another is rich and must be tried by riches; each must come victorious out of the trial, whatever it may be, to which he is called and which God has prepared for him. The man of whom mention is made in the Sacred Text is said to have been

put to the test of wealth: *"Who hath been tried thereby* (gold) *and found perfect,"* that is, who did not love it inordinately and did not put his trust in it. The poor man who has lived holily in his poverty is blessed, and so also is the rich man who has lived holily in the midst of riches. In heaven, or in the House of the Lord, there are many mansions and divers recompenses, and so also are there many paths by which to travel thither, and each must travel by the path that is marked out for him. If St. Francis Assisi, Chiara di Montefalco, and the Capuchin Felix, all the poorest of the poor, are in bliss in heaven, so also are holy Job and David and St. Louis of France, and countless others, who were the richest of the rich in their day. The former were poor in fact, the latter, though abounding in wealth, were very poor in spirit. Lay it well to heart, my friends, none enter into heaven except those who have been poor in fact, have loved poverty, or have at least been resigned to be poor; and the rich, who have been at least in heart detached from riches, and have been poor in spirit.

The possession of riches is one of the most terrible trials to which any man can be subjected, and how few are there who come victorious out of it! How few are there who escape this calamity, which attracts hearts so

powerfully! How true are those appalling words of Christ: "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation." How difficult is it for the rich to be saved! "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven."

Hence, my very dear friends, if you are poor do not murmur or complain; rather give thanks to God, since for you the way to heaven is easy and rapid. If you are rich do as St. Paul bids you, do not put your trust in riches, which are at best uncertain, but use them in doing good; detach your hearts from them, and give of them freely that you may lighten your boat, sail more securely across the stormy sea of life and anchor safe in the peaceful port of a happy eternity. The more heavily laden a vessel is, the slower its course and the more easily is it shipwrecked; and the more lightly laden it is, the more rapid its course and the less danger of shipwreck. The rich man who has learned to live in poverty and who has, as the Sacred Text says, been tried by gold and made perfect, is preparing for himself an eternity of glory: "*He shall have glory everlasting.*"

And what is the root of so much glory? What is the reason of so much merit in this rich man who has been tried and has come out of the trial victorious? Apart from the grace of God, which anticipates and strength-

ens human weakness and which the inspired writer necessarily takes for granted, though he does not say so, this root of glory and source of merit are to be sought in the liberty of man and in its co-operation with divine grace. This truth is felicitously expressed in these two phrases: *"He,"* the rich man, *"that could have transgressed and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things, and hath not done them."* The two clauses coalesce into one, the latter being but a repetition and an affirmation of the former.

This liberty, which is characteristic of man and without which no conception could be had of merit or of a distinction between good and evil, could not have been expressed more precisely or more forcibly. It is lodged in the faculty of choosing between good and evil,[1] or between good and good. Where there is no choice, there is no liberty; and where there is no liberty, there is no merit; and where there is no merit, there is no reason for reward or punishment. To reward or punish one who

[1] The essence of human liberty consists in being exempt from any force whatever which could coerce us to do a thing or not to do it, or to do it this way rather than that; and hence it consists in the faculty of *choosing*. This choice may be between good and evil, and this is the liberty we have here on earth; but a choice between good and evil is not essential to liberty, rather it is an imperfection; the choice may also be between good and good, as in the instance of Jesus Christ, of the saints in heaven, and of God. All that is required to have liberty is that there be a free choice.

can not act other than he does act, is to upset all idea of the just and the unjust, and to destroy all morality. Who would think of rewarding or punishing a plant or an ox because either did well or ill? Now do we possess this liberty of choice between good and evil, between good and good? Have we this inherent liberty, which lies at the very bottom of our soul, which rises out of the very springs of our being, and by which we are masters of ourselves, can do as we like, feel ourselves to be free and the absolute arbiters of our acts? Any one who is not conscious that he possesses this inalienable force or power to choose what and as he likes and to cleave either to good or evil, without being coerced to do so by any force either within him or without, does not deserve to be called a reasonable being. I feel that I can stand still or walk, that I can go into church or stay out, pray or not pray, obey or disobey, and no one can possibly persuade me to the contrary. If you bid me speak, I can be silent; if you bid me be silent, I can speak, and that in spite of threat or torture; and if another should by the use of violence prevent me from expressing my thought or feeling, this will still abide just as it is in the depths of my soul. True, science by every sort of sophism has done its best to cast doubt upon or to deny individual liberty, but the attempt can never be success-

ful, any more than can that of a child who spreads out a strip of canvas thinking thereby to eclipse the sun or rather to shut out its light. Such is the liberty that we all possess, the liberty that decides our lot for eternity. If we make a good use of it and dedicate it to God's service by observing His law, we shall be saved; if we abuse it by transgressing His law, we shall be lost. Our lot, then, and let us never forget it, is in our own hands, in the use we make of our liberty, that most precious and most terrifying of gifts.

"*Therefore are his goods established in the Lord.*" Because the rich man might have transgressed and did not, might have done evil and did not, therefore are his goods, that is, his happiness secure in heaven, in God's own hands, and even here on earth his riches will be preserved by God and augmented.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the Book of Ecclesiasticus belongs to the Old Covenant, which promised not only everlasting goods or happiness to him who lived uprightly, but also temporal goods; and hence it is reasonable to assume that in this passage there were promised to the rich and virtuous man, together with the spiritual goods of the life to come, also temporal goods in this.

In the Christian economy things are quite otherwise. Jesus Christ promises to those who

observe His law and live a holy life not temporal rewards, but eternal, since He wills that they shall live by faith; still at times He gives His servants also a recompense on this earth, and of this we have instances in Sacred Writ and the proof of experience. He says in the Gospel: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things* (that is, temporal and necessary things) *will be added unto you."* And again: "There is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for My sake and for the Gospel who shall not receive an hundred times as much now in this time —and shall possess everlasting life." Nay, we very frequently see rich men who are Christians and live as such, who are upright and charitable, who respect the laws of God and of His Church, who are blessed in their families and increase their wealth. One of the chief duties of a rich man, if he be virtuous, is to give alms, and hence the Holy Spirit says of him: *"All the church of the saints shall declare his alms."* The rich man out of his abundance should give to others, and not be like the Dead Sea, that receives the waters of the Jordan and retains them in its bosom, but like a spring that gives what it receives, and the more it receives the more it gives. He should give in two ways, first by securing work for him who is able to

labor, and this is the best way of assisting others; and next by giving alms to them who can not labor. This is not simply a counsel, but a precept clearly laid down in Holy Writ. If the rich man gives generously in alms, he who receives them should show his gratitude; if the rich man should not seek in giving alms food for his vanity or ambition, he who receives them should not abuse them, nor show himself unworthy of them; if the left hand of the rich man should not know what the right hand does, the tongue of the beneficiary should not remain silent, but should declare his alms. Yes, ye rich, be assured that the poor will declare your alms, and so will the temples you adorn, the hospitals, the homes for the poor, and the orphanages you build and sustain; the poor that have been fed by you and clothed and housed, the abandoned children and the waifs that have been gathered up and provided for, the widows that have been consoled, the sufferings that have been relieved—all will declare your alms: *"And all the church of the saints will declare his alms."* The afflicted you have solaced, the hungry you have fed, the ragged you have clad, the abandoned you have collected, the infirm you have succored, the orphans, the widows, the distressed you have aided, will lift their voices to heaven and will

cause to descend upon you the choicest and most copious blessings, and your name will be held in honor by man and written in the Book of Life.

HOMILY VI

Mass of a Confessor not a Bishop

Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.—*Luke* xii. 35–40.

You know, my dear friends, that the discourses of Jesus Christ were not, as we should say, *formal* discourses, in which all the

parts are symmetrically disposed and connected, and suitable divisions made and demonstrations given, after the manner of great orators. He was wont to speak to His disciples and to the people as a father to his children, or as a teacher in the midst of his pupils, listening to their questions, replying to their difficulties, and as the need arose interrogating them. This is why His language is not only plain and simple, but unassuming and far removed from those flights of oratory and studied, rhetorical forms to be met with in the labored discourses of the ordinary speaker. There is in His speech a clearness and simplicity to which there is nothing comparable in all the books that were ever written. The words do not obscure the ideas; the ideas choose the words and they are as luminous in them as is an electric light enclosed in clear crystal. Hence it is that in the discourses of Jesus, always in the highest degree familiar, images and metaphors, taken from the most ordinary things, are very frequent; and hence also His discourses are not continuous, but resemble dialogues or conversations, and abound in repetitions of some of the leading and most practical truths. We have a striking instance of this in the few verses I am about to explain. The sense could not be clearer or better adapted to the capacity of the people; still the truths they

contain, though quite familiar, are very valuable. I beg you to be attentive and to profit by them.

After telling us to be full of trust, to drive from our minds all anxiety as to the future, to seek first of all the kingdom of God and to lay up treasure in heaven, He exhorts us to go courageously forward on our journey and to be watchful: *Let your loins be girt and lamps burning in your hands.*

What is the life of a Christian on this earth? It is a journey from the cradle to the grave, from time to eternity; he ought therefore to live in constant anticipation of the coming of the supreme Judge, who will pronounce upon him an irrevocable sentence either of everlasting life or of everlasting death. He ought therefore to walk cautiously along the great highway and be continually on his guard against enemies who lie in wait for him. This is the scope of the exhortation of Jesus Christ, which He throws into a quite familiar form. The Orientals were then accustomed to wear, and still wear, long loose flowing robes, and this fashion was common even amongst the Romans, who wore the toga.[1] In order to be

[1] It is well known that the most stately dress among the Romans was the toga; it was the dress of the magistrates, and Marcus Tullius says: *Cedant arma togae.* This dress is still used in the highest tribunals, and habitually by the clergy, for the cassock of the priest is the toga of the Romans.

free and agile in working or walking they tucked up their garments and bound them at the hips with a cincture. From this custom Our Lord took occasion to inculcate a truth which He had very much at heart, saying: "You must make the great journey from earth to heaven, you must scale the mountain of virtue; hence free yourselves from the hindrance of your dress and from attachment to things here below; throw off this burden that will impede you in walking: *Let your loins be girt.*" Travelers, soldiers, those who carry great weights, are accustomed to bind their flanks with a belt, not alone to prevent their long loose garments from being in their way, but also to strengthen their bodies and to enable them the better to endure fatigue. So should we do, my friends; let us, then, rouse ourselves and put forth our whole strength so that we may be able to endure this long and perilous journey.

The Fathers tell us that the cincture is a symbol of mortification, for by mortification we curb our wicked desires and especially that which is the most common and violent, namely, the incontinence of the flesh. Let us crush its disorderly movements, take from it its food and subject it to the yoke of Jesus Christ, and then our journey, as St. Peter Chrysologus says,[1]

[1] "Lumbos nostros adstringi jubet baltheo castitatis . . .

will be easier and safer. Let us imitate the children of Israel, who on the eve of their setting out from Egypt for the land of their fathers, and obedient to the command of God given them by Moses, girt their loins, shod their feet, and staff in hand, were ready at a given signal to depart.

To this image of wayfarers Christ adds another not less lively, namely, that of servants waiting for their lord to return from a marriage feast.

Among the Hebrews, as among all peoples, ancient and modern, marriages were celebrated with great feasts, which took place in the evening. It was natural, then, that the guests should return home after nightfall and at a late hour, and hence the servants were ready to receive them with lighted lamps. This usage is also, and more clearly, referred to in the parable of the ten virgins. We can fancy, then, the lord returning home at dead of night from the marriage feast and the servants waiting with lighted lamps to receive him and conduct him to his apartments. The divine Master makes use of the custom to remind His disciples how they should act. The marriage feast is a figure of heaven; the lord is Jesus Christ,

et constringi mandat rena virtutis, ut carne succincta ad Domini occursum liber, velox, expeditus nostrae mentis reddatur incessus." (Serm. xxiv, apud A Lapide.)

who will come from heaven to judge us; the darkness represents this world enveloped in ignorance and pervaded by passion; and the servants personate the faithful. Turning to His disciples, and through them to all believers, Jesus says: *"Let there be burning lamps in your hands, and you yourselves like men who wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding."* Why should the lamps be lighted? What do these lamps mean? Lamps are lighted to dispel the darkness of the night, and here they no doubt signify faith, the light of which is to guide us through the night of this world of dense darkness. Every one ought to have his lamp in his hand. But as far as others are concerned faith without works is a lamp that has been extinguished. And, in matter of fact, suppose any of you has faith, how shall I be able to see it, if it is not made manifest by works of faith? It may be in you, deep down in your heart, but I can not see it, nor shall I be able to see it, if there are no works to reveal it. You think, you will, you desire, but your thought, will, and desire are within you and I can not see them; in order that they may be seen and verified what is required? That they may be made manifest. And how are they made manifest? By words and still better by deeds. You walk, you plough a field, you write, or you carve a statue; these I see and I must

recognize that you wish to walk, to plough, to write, or to carve a statue; your acts, much better than your words, reveal to me your thought and your will. So also your works make manifest your faith. If you have faith, but not works, only you yourself see this faith; it is a light under a bushel; but if you manifest your faith by works, then your lamp is set upon a candlestick, diffuses its light round about, and illuminates and rejoices all, and as St. Gregory the Great well says: "Our lights burn, when by good works we give bright example to our neighbor. Here, then, are two commandments, to gird our loins about and to keep our lights burning—the cleanness of purity in our body, and the light of truth in our works. Neither is chastity a great thing without good works, nor good works anything without chastity."[1]

Jesus Christ would have His disciples like servants who wait for their master on his return from a wedding. And why? *"That when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately."* "And when does the Lord come?" asks St. Gregory the Great. "The Lord comes at the hour of judgment; He

[1] "Lucernas ardentes in manibus tenemus, cum per bona opera proximis nostris lucis exempla monstramus. Duo sunt quae jubentur, et lumbos restringere et lucernas tenere, ut et munditia sit castitatis in corpore et lumen veritatis in operatione; nec castitas ergo magna est sine bono opere, nec opus bonum aliquid est sine castitate." (Hom. xiii, in Officio.)

knocks when by the pains of sickness He bids us know that death is nigh. We open to Him immediately if we receive Him in love. Whoso fears to leave this body will not open to the Judge when He knocks, for he dreads to see that Judge, whom he knows he has despised." [1] Do we wish not to dread to open the door and to welcome the Judge when He comes? Then let us be always prepared to receive Him and let us always have our lamps lighted, that is to say, let our faith be ever living and fruitful in good works.

And here Jesus breaks out into an exclamation which expresses the joy He will experience on finding His servants at their posts and the reward laid up for them: *"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching,"* that is, with their loins girt about and with lamps in their hands, ready and anxious to receive the Lord. It is hardly necessary to call your attention to how insistent Our Lord is in recommending watchfulness throughout the Gospel and especially in this passage, and rightly so, for in matter of fact, it sums up all the practical part of a Christian life,

[1] "Venit Dominus, cum ad judicium properat; pulsat vero cum jam per aegritudinis molestias esse mortem vicinam designat; cui confestim aperimus, si hunc cum amore suscipiamus. Aperire enim judici pulsanti non vult, qui exire de corpore trepidat, et videre eum, quem se contempsisse meminit, judicem formidat." (Loc. cit.)

since it is morally impossible, if we are constantly on the watch and have our thoughts fixed on our duties, not to fulfil them.

Jesus goes on to explain why He calls these servants happy or blessed, saying: *"Amen I say to you that He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them."* O the truly divine and ineffable goodness of God! His servants gird themselves about to follow Jesus Christ more readily and He, their Lord, girds Himself to minister unto them! What condescension! When Jesus was once seated at table, as we learn from another passage of this Gospel, there was strife among the disciples as to which of them should seem to be the greater, and He said to them: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them are called beneficent; but you not so, but he that is the greater among you let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader as he that serveth. For which is the greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."[1] Jesus, who here on earth sat at table with His disciples and ministered to them, He who is the Lord of all things, will also, as we should say, sit with them at the everlasting banquet in heaven and minis-

[1] Luke xxii. 24–28.

ter to them. But how? By revealing His glory, by giving Himself to all according to the capacity of each, by gratifying throughout all eternity every desire and need of mind and heart with the food of truth and love.

Note that the Evangelist says that Jesus will make the watchful servants sit down at table in heaven, and that going up and down among them, as if He were the servant of all, He will serve them and give them their fill. Of course all this is meant to be taken figuratively, since in heaven there are neither banquets, nor material food, nor servants, and neither do they there sit at table nor pass here and there in serving others. Jesus Christ borrowed the image of an earthly banquet and from what takes place here on this earth He wishes to convey to us an idea of what will take place at the banquet to be celebrated, in a way incomprehensible to us, in heaven.

"*He will make them sit down,*" that is, they will be at rest and enjoy an unutterable peace in heaven.[1] Which of us does not long for this peace? Tossed hither and thither by the waves of the sea of life, which is always in storm; broken and worn by a long and fatiguing journey across this desert, which is our place of

[1] "Faciet illos discumbere, idest aeterna quiete refoveri." (S. Gregorius M., I. cit.)

exile, who does not yearn for the quiet and repose, so dear to us after toil and anxiety? Well, we shall have both, if at the end of this day of toil and distress we shall be found faithful and watchful servants: *"He will make them sit down."*

They shall sit down at table, but what table? The table of the angels, of God Himself, where will be given to eat food, which, while satisfying, whets the appetite, which has within it every finest flavor and yet never nauseates, the food of souls, which is none other than truth itself and bliss itself, God in His essence, light of minds and life of hearts, and *"Jesus Christ passing will minister unto them."* Jesus Christ the fountain of all truth and happiness, will flood His servants with both, and hence is it rightly said that He will minister unto them, or that He will be their felicity forever more.[1] So, my friends, you must not fancy that man can find his true and perfect happiness in anything whatsoever outside of God; none but He and He alone who is our beginning can possibly be our end; and He alone can and ought to be our felicity and fill the immense void of our hearts; in this sense is it said with perfect truth that He Himself will minister to us at the heavenly banquet; that is, He will give us

1 "Transiens Dominus ministrat, quia lucis suae illustratione nos satiat." (S. Gregorius M., I. cit.)

abundantly of Himself. What greatness! What happiness!

Jesus Christ goes on to explain still more clearly who those servants are who will merit so great an honor and such happiness: *"And if He shall come in the second watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."* As you know, the Hebrews divided the night into four watches of three hours each; and when it is said that He will come in the second and third watches, the meaning is that He will come at dead of night, that is, between nine in the evening and three in the morning, a time when it is the more difficult to keep awake and hence the merit being greater, the reward will be greater.

To still further enforce the truth He is insisting on, Our Lord adds another image or similitude, which we have already seen in another Homily and which I shall therefore only refer to here: *"But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open."* And now what is the conclusion to be drawn from all these images and warnings? It is contained in this sentence with which the Gospel read to you closes: *"Be ye then also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come."* Let us be always awake and alert,

watching over ourselves, ever ready to give an account of our works to the divine Judge, who will come when we least expect Him; as St. Basil says, "Let us live as if every day were to be the last of our lives."[1] Such is the conclusion, such the fruit contained in this passage of the Gospel. Shall we profit by it, my friends? I hope so, since on this constant watchfulness, on this abiding attitude of the mind, depends our lot for eternity.

[1] "Oportet nos quotidie ad emigrandum ex hac vita esse paratos et nutum Domini fixis oculis expectare." (S. Basilius, apud A Lapide.)

HOMILY VII

Mass of a Confessor not a Bishop

Justus ut Palma, etc.

For I think that God hath set forth us apostles, the last, as it were men appointed to death; we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honorable, but we without honor. Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. And we labor, working with our hands; we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it. We are blasphemed, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all even until now. I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children.—*1 Cor.* iv. 9–14.

I fancy that on listening to the words just read you will have divined their author, and will have said in your hearts: "These are the words of St. Paul." The language of that wonderful man, whether as regards its subject-

matter, its form, or its virile strength, is such that the very first words of it betray the writer. He is ever the same, he never changes, and may be compared to a river that comes leaping down from a spring high up in the mountains and rushes on foaming among the rocks, dashing along, boiling and roaring, driving its swirling currents back upon itself, impatient of all restraint, until it finds a way to the open plain below, which it irrigates and makes fertile. In the mind of this apostle truths jostle one another and struggle for free utterance, which the narrow limits of a letter will not permit; the difficulty, too, of expressing himself in a language not his own seems to redouble the energy of that fiery soul, and the words come leaping from his pen, halting it may be, but rugged and incisive. Of all this we have an instance in the verses that are the subject of this Homily. There runs through them all a vein of delicate irony, which closes with words overflowing with fatherly affection.

There were very serious dissensions in the Church of Corinth, founded by St. Paul, some claiming Apollo as their master, others Paul, and still others Peter, and in consequence souls were greatly disturbed. With a view of re-establishing peace St. Paul sets out by stating how we ministers of Christ should be judged; he adds that we should not regard the judgments

of men, but of God, who in His own time will make all things manifest; then he goes on with biting irony to lash the pride of the leaders of the Corinthians and to make a comparison between himself, dishonored and driven from post to pillar, and them, so full of self-conceit. He says: *"For I think that God hath set forth us apostles, the last, as it were men appointed to death."*

"You Corinthians," he says, "have a high idea of yourselves; you are wise, and rich, and abound in everything; you are kings, and you set yourselves up on high. And yet that faith and true wisdom, which you possess and on which you pride yourselves, is not yours; God gave it to you and I and my companions in the sacred ministry communicated it to you. Compare yourselves with us, you who are so proud of yourselves, and us, who are apostles of Jesus Christ. We have succeeded to the prophets, and like them we are made a target for trials, persecutions, and slander. Look well at us; we are here on this earth appointed, not to glory or to triumphs, but to pains and to death; we are like those wretched men who go down into the arena to battle with wild beasts and gladiators, victims destined to death: *Men appointed to death."* These words of the Apostle are not mere words, or a rhetorical exaggeration, and to be convinced of this it is

only necessary to read the Acts of the Apostles. His whole life, from the day of his conversion on the way to Damascus until his death in Rome, was an incessant conflict, one continuous martyrdom; and what we say of St. Paul may be said with equal truth of all the apostles, and of those who continue their work. And shall we, the heirs of their spirit and their teaching, called to carry forward their work, have the assurance to claim to be treated differently from what they were treated? We should be stupid to do so and unpardonably proud.

"*We apostles are appointed to death; we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.*" Look at those wretched men condemned to the wild beasts; they go down into the arena to contend with them, thus to furnish a spectacle to the immense multitude that crowds the amphitheater; so also we apostles, *we are made a spectacle to the world*,[1] that is, to all men, good and bad, Christians and Pagans who look upon us, or hear us spoken of. But not only are we made a spectacle to the world, but also to *angels;* to the good and holy angels, who come to our aid, rejoice in our combats, and give thanks for them to God; to the wicked angels, to demons, who hate us and stir the

[1] In the Greek the true reading is: *We are made a theater or show,* θεὰτρον.

wrath of the wicked against us; and to *men*, who treat us as the *world* does.

"The eyes of men and angels and demons," says the Apostle, "are fixed upon us, but with what different thoughts and feelings!" Here the style of St. Paul is beautiful and stately; and reveals to us the true orator. One who battles under the eyes of his king, in the presence of the great and of an immense multitude, feels his strength redoubled, fearlessly faces the greatest dangers, and exhibits prodigies of valor; and we, my friends, are battling under the eyes of God, of angels and saints and devils, and how can we help feeling our courage increase, or avoid being honestly proud in having such and so many witnesses to our prowess and our victory? St. Bernard says: "We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men; to the virtuous and to the wicked. Both of these latter watch us intently, the wicked, inspired by hatred, the virtuous, moved with compassionate sympathy; the former desire our fall, the latter our triumph. We are being tried, placed as it were between earth and heaven, between the world and the cloister. Each keeps a close eye on our behavior, and each cries out: 'If he would but come over to us.'"[1]

[1] Spectaculum facti sumus mundo, et angelis, et hominibus. Ita plane et malis et bonis pariter. Illorum enim sollicitat

St. Paul goes on with the ironical antitheses between himself and the Corinthians, in order thus by his own example to weaken the vanity and break the pride of his dear sons in Christ: *"We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ."* We apostles preach Jesus Christ crucified, and this the Gentiles and the wise of the world think a stupidity and they also think us stupid; you on the contrary think yourselves wise. Certainly that is a lovely and marvelous wisdom that leads you to wear out your lives in wrangling and to waste your energies in puerile questions of precedence and in the strife of parties!

"We are weak, but you are strong. We, apostles and your teachers, are weak and endure hardships; we have in your very midst borne privations of every kind and of these you yourselves have been witnesses; and you, our disciples, hold your heads high and fancy you are great people; you are puffed up with the little knowledge and eloquence you possess: *You are honorable, but we without honor.* You Corinthians are quite supercilious and boastful because you are, or think you are, learned and

invidiae passio: istos compassio misericordiae, ut in nos incessanter intendant; illi quidem defectum nostrum, isti profectum desiderantes. Nimirum in probatione sumus, inter paradisum et infernum intermedii, velut inter claustrum constituii. Diligenter consideratur utrinque quid agimus; utrinque dicitur: "O si ad nos transeat!" (Serm. xxxi, apud A Lapide.)

cultured; and see me, your teacher; I possess little of the science of this world, and am contemned and reviled. Look upon me and upon my companions in the apostolate, what have you seen in us in the past, what do you see in us now?[1] *Even to this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked.* For many years I have worked in the apostolate, I have been preaching the Gospel of Christ for close upon twenty years, and during all that time I have been poor and in want, destitute of everything. In this life two things are especially necessary to us, namely, food and drink, and clothing; of these I have been in need; I have been hungry and thirsty and have not had wherewith to clothe myself. Nor is this all: to the wants of nature and the pains which my condition imposes have been added the sufferings inflicted by malicious and brutal men: *We are buffeted.*" And do not fancy that the abuse and pains inflicted upon St. Paul stopped at being cuffed by them; he endured many other punishments, insults, and outrages at their hands, a long and frightful enumeration of which he has left us in his second Letter to the Corinthians;[2] here he refers only to his being cuffed, either because being slapped in the face is a terrible affront to

[1] It should be borne in mind that this Letter was addressed to the Corinthians in the name of Paul and Sosthenes, and hence the plural is used.

[2] xi. 23 *et seq.*

a man, or because he wished to remind them of the dastardly outrage inflicted on him in the presence of the whole Sanhedrim, when the high priest Ananias ordered his minions to strike him on the face.[1] "And," adds St. Paul, "not only have I been struck in the face, but *I have no fixed abode.* The exercise of the apostolic ministry, poverty, and persecution constrain me to pass from place to place and prevent my having any permanent abiding place." And even all this does not end the pains and privations of the great apostle. To live and yet to be a burden to no one; *"We labor working with our own hands."* In another place St. Paul glories that he so works with his hands, and even protests that he will allow no one to rob him of this glorious privilege. To us in this age it may seem wonderful that an apostle did not disdain manual labor, as something unbecoming and injurious to the ministry in which he was engaged; but it should be borne in mind that among the Hebrews manual labor was not regarded as demeaning and humiliating; on the contrary, every class of persons esteemed such labor honorable and ennobling, and Christ Himself, the Son of God, made man, voluntarily chose so to labor until He was thirty years of age. To fancy, then, that manual labor, no matter of what kind it

[1] Acts xxiii. 2.

may be, is humiliating, is nothing more or less than a vulgar and plebeian prejudice, the very existence of which should seem impossible in a cultured Christian society. The Apostle, that marvelous man, so distinguished for lofty genius and deep learning, for the great dignity to which he had been called, for fortitude and strength of mind, and for all the other endowments and virtues for which he was conspicuous, taught by his own example that manual labor, even the most menial, honors man, is for most men a duty, is imposed upon us by nature and therefore by God Himself, and that all of us should earn our bread by the sweat of our brows. Which of you, my friends, can despise manual labor and seek to escape it, when you reflect that St. Paul, the Doctor of the Gentiles, not only himself worked with his hands, but boasted of it and gloried in it—*"And we labor working with our own hands"?*

To break the pride of the Corinthians St. Paul goes on enumerating his hardships and the severe trials of his life: *"We are reviled and we bless; we are persecuted and we suffer it; we are blasphemed and we entreat."* To us who have been born in a Christian society and have grown up in the midst of Christian influences this language is neither novel nor strange; true, our lives may not be conformable to these maxims, but to our minds they seem not

only reasonable, but beautiful and holy; but this was not the case when St. Paul first preached them and proclaimed them in the name of Christ to a Pagan people. Among the Pagans, even those of Greece and Rome, an insult must be avenged, and he who would put up with it was despised as a poltroon and a coward; but to return good for evil was unheard of and utterly impossible. True, some such maxims might be met with up and down the writings of Stoic and Platonic philosophers, but they are found only in books and were never put into practice; they were known it may be to a few learned men, but they were unknown to the people, practically disavowed, and propounded without authority; and if in some rare cases they were partially observed, this was done to feed the pride and parade the pomp of a moral philosophy superior to that of the crowd. But St. Paul enunciates this sublime teaching and insists upon it as necessary to all and each without distinction, and he confirms his teaching by his own example: "Look upon us, we are insulted and reviled in public and in private, by high and low, day in and day out and by all; we are execrated as the most perverse of beings, and we are hated by every one. And what do we do in return? We bless those who abuse and curse us. When persecuted, we are patient; when calumniated, we

answer by announcing the truth to them who slander us." Such language is but a repetition, almost a citation of that of the Gospel: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you; and pray for them that calumniate you." [1] The moral law can not rise to a greater height and perfection; and not only is this law known, but it is universally practised among the followers of Christ; for it is not an unusual thing for us to hear from the mouth of the simple people of the humbler class, when they are harassed, illtreated and hated, these and like expressions: "For the love of God, we pardon him who has wronged us and we pray for our enemies." Nothing can be more sublime and heroic than such expressions; they are a true echo of the Gospel.

In closing his enumeration St. Paul says: "*We are made as the refuse of this world, as the offscouring of all even until now.*" I think it would be difficult to fall lower than this in the esteem of men, or to find stronger expressions to describe the depth of contempt to which one can descend: The sweepings and the refuse of the world! Nothing viler, more despicable and abject can be imagined; and yet St. Paul says frankly and boldly in the very teeth of

[1] Luke vi. 27–28. St. Paul when he wrote this Letter may have been familiar with the two Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and with that of St. Luke, which he seems to call in a special sense *his* Gospel.

the Corinthians that such was his condition, and the story of his life from beginning to end proves beyond all doubt that he did not in the least exaggerate.

The scope of this eloquent digression of St. Paul may be thus summed up: "You Corinthians are split up into parties, one contending against the other, and what is the cause of all this? Your pride; you are desirous of being wise teachers and brilliant talkers; you wish to be eminent and to make a figure in the world; but in doing so you forget the religion I taught you and the example I gave you. I have been your teacher and it is enough for a pupil to be as his master; look upon me your pattern, and then proudly hold your heads aloft and ostentatiously display your learning, wealth and power, while I, following my Master and yours, shall go on glorying in my weakness, poverty, and humiliations, in my sorrows and in the cross, being as I am the sweepings of the world and the refuse of all."

Here is an observation especially applicable to us churchmen, yet not wholly profitless to you of the laity.

The apostles and their successors by their preaching, by the holiness of their lives and by their sacrifices and the shedding of their blood, within a few centuries gained the whole Pagan world to Jesus Christ and brought it to kneel at

the foot of the Cross. As was natural and becoming the world, once it was Christian, lavished upon churchmen honors, homage, and wealth, for in honoring them men felt they were honoring the representatives of Jesus Christ Himself. But as time went on the Faith of the world was enfeebled; and, naturally, when love and reverence for religion decreased, so also did the honors, influence, wealth, and comfort which churchmen enjoyed decrease, and this, as we see, is the condition of things at this day. Little by little society is lapsing back into Paganism, and as a natural consequence the respect, influence, and power of churchmen are proportionally diminished, and hence it is not surprising to see them at times, or to hear of them being reduced to the condition in which St. Paul was, a description of which you have just heard from himself. What, then, is to be done, my friends? The example of St. Paul will teach us. He did not lose heart; he went on his way courageously and gave by his example a pledge of victory to his successors. The world makes war on us, despises us, reduces us to poverty, insults, and slanders us; but are we any better than St. Paul and the divine Master? No, we shall go on our way as usual; we shall bless those who curse us; we shall be resigned when we are badgered and harried; when calumniated we shall announce

the truth, always ready to become the offscouring and refuse of the world, if only by so doing we can aid it, enlighten it, gain it to Christ and save it. Now more than in any former age it is essential to us priests to fashion our lives on the sublime examples left us by Jesus Christ and His apostles, and to place our hopes not in means that may fail us, but in the divine strength of the truth we preach and in Him whose ministers we are.

Having been accustomed for a long course of centuries to be honored and obeyed by a society that was Christian, we must accustom ourselves now to be neglected, disobeyed, and insulted by a society that is largely non-Christian. This is a sorrow for us and an evil for society; but it may be to us priests a powerful incentive to acquire those virtues that are proper to our state, and this will be a gain for you of the laity, who will reap the advantage of it. A loving God, and of this there is no doubt, permits this condition of affairs, this severe trial of the clergy, in order to lead us back to the austere virtues of the early Church, and thus infuse new Christian life unto you of the laity.

St. Paul draws in a rapid sketch a picture of the apostolic life, with its sorrows and humiliations; and this outline, he felt, might dishearten and frighten the Corinthians, who had just come into the Church; this he perceived at

once and hastened, like the real master that he was in the art of speech, to soften down the effects of the austere truths, to which he had just given utterance: *"I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children."* How kind and delicate and thoughtful! He had painted for them in vivid colors his own condition, and the picture really frightened them; he feared he had opened a wound in their heart and he must heal it. Hence he says: "I do not say these things to you to abash you and bring the blush to your cheeks, not at all; a father always loves his children and I tenderly love you; but I have spoken thus to you because I believe it my duty to do so, and it will benefit you to hear what I have said; I have admonished you and do you profit by the admonition, and receive it as a token of the intense love I bear you."

Let us sum up in one short sentence the substance of this passage of the Epistle of St. Paul. The Apostle says that a Christian, who is really such, must not look for anything in this world but neglect, contempt, reviling, and persecution, being in this respect like his divine Master; when face to face with such trials, foretold by Christ, we should not lose heart nor be cast down, rather we should glory in them, recognizing in them a certain pledge of our vocation and of our salvation.

HOMILY VIII

Mass of a Confessor not a Bishop

FEAR not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not; where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—*Luke* xii. 32–34.

THERE are but three verses in this Gospel, still they contain a treasure of practical teaching, profitable to all; and in them reference is also made to evangelical perfection, which is of counsel, not of precept.

We must show the connection between these three verses and those that precede, in order that the sense of Christ's words may be the better understood. He had spoken the parable of the rich man, who lived a luxurious life, who knew not what to do with his crops, so abundant were they that particular year, and who after pulling down his barns, building new ones, and

filling them with grain, said to himself: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer." Then pursuing the natural train of thought, suggested by the parable, He exhorts His disciples not to be solicitous for the future; to put their trust in their heavenly Father; to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, adding that the Lord would provide for the rest. When He had gone on this far, turning to the little group of His faithful apostles and, as I think, extending His hands toward them, and addressing His words particularly to them, in accents of more than fatherly tenderness, His eyes beaming with love, He uttered the words I have just read to you and which are the subject of this Homily.

Fear not, little flock.[1] Having spoken of the providence of God, who watches over all creatures, Jesus turning to the little band of His apostles, who were gathered about Him and who were the first nucleus of His Church, and, as it were, caressing them as He might little children, said: "*Fear not, little flock.* If you consider only yourselves you have everything to

[1] It is clear that the nominative is here used for the vocative, just as classical writers are wont to do in order to give greater force to a phrase. The Greek word *ποίμνιον*, the diminutive of *ποίμνη*, can not be well rendered into Latin. The word *pusillus* of the Vulgate corrects the sense; it is translated into English by *little flock*, which corresponds well to the Greek.

fear. You are little because you are few; you are little because you have no learning, because you are poor and of humble origin, because you have neither name nor influence, and because you have chosen to follow Me, who have not whereon to lay My head; and yet I say to you: *Fear not.* You are little and weak in every respect; as compared with the world, you are simply nothing; but you have cast in your lot with Me, with God, who is omnipotent; therefore banish all fear, for of your victory there can be no possible doubt."

These words, addressed to the apostles, are addressed in a special way to all His followers, one by one, and in a most special way to His Church. "O Christians," He seems to say, "you who live upon this earth, what are you face to face with the world that lays snares for you, makes war upon you, outrages and despises you? What are you face to face with those interminable legions of hell that are ever striving to do you harm, that never give you a moment's peace night or day, and that employ every artifice and use every effort to drive you along the way that leads to perdition? You are little; you are as leaves stirred by the wind and borne along before the storm; you are as a grain of sand that the passer-by unconsciously tramples upon; you are nothing; you can do nothing; and yet you must

not fear: *Fear not.* Sheltered under the wings of God, trusting in Him, as does a son in a father, by Him and through Him you can do all things and come forth victors from the most trying ordeals: *Fear not!"*

Look upon the Church; she was wholly and entirely in that little band of apostles, to whom Jesus was speaking; they were the seed of the Church, she is the flowering of that seed; they were the root, she is the grown-up tree. But what was even the Church as compared during the various periods of her existence with the multitudes of her enemies, with their wealth and power? What was the Church, impersonated in the apostles, as compared with the Synagogue? What was the Church, unarmed and utterly destitute, as compared with Nero and the colossal Roman Empire, the then mistress of the world? What was the Church face to face with the countless hordes of Barbarians and Mussulmans, who overran all Europe and a great part of Asia and Africa, burning her temples, scattering and exterminating her children? And yet in that fierce and unequal contest who conquered? The little flock of Christ conquered; conquered not by inflicting wounds but by suffering; not with arms but with the cross; not by killing her enemies but by dying; conquered as her Head and Spouse conquered, by being lifted up on the Cross and purpling it with

His blood. St. Peter Chrysologus says: "She regained by humility what she had lost by pride, and the lowly little flock vanquished by her meekness the ferocity of all the most savage races; the little flock conquered and subdued as many divers kinds of wild beasts as there are nations that she subjugated to the easy yoke of Christ."[1] And at this day, when she has grown to such dimensions and is spread over all the earth, she is still little, as compared with the twelve hundred millions of Mussulmans, Pagans, Buddhists, and followers of Fo and Confucius, who live upon this globe and are always more or less at war with her. And yet this little flock of Christ, that "suffers and struggles and prays from sea to sea," not only holds her own, but grows day by day, overcomes in the countless trials to which she is subjected, and by virtue of her genius, learning, and progress, by her charity and the truth of which she is the depositary, holds sway throughout the entire world, which little by little is surrendering to her. Is not this the clearest proof that a divine power dwells in her and of the truth of the omnipotent words uttered by Christ more than nineteen centuries ago: *"Fear not, little flock"?*

[1] "Acquisivit humilitas superbia quod amisit et grex pusillus ac mitis, totas et varias edomuit propria mansuetudine feritates; pusillus grex vicit ac fregit tot genera bestiarum, quot diversitates subdidit jugo Christi nationum." (Serm. xxii.)

"For it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom." What kingdom is this, of which Jesus Christ here speaks? It is certainly not an earthly kingdom, since He Himself affirmed that His kingdom is not of this world; nor do I believe that He is here speaking of the Church, which is indeed the kingdom of Christ, since in that case the apostles themselves would be that kingdom. I think the word "kingdom" here means *heaven, life everlasting,* as if Christ should say: "You are little, poor, weak, but fear not; nothing shall be wanting to you, for He who gives what is more can not refuse what is less; God your Father will give you heaven in His own good time, an eternal kingdom; and if so, will He not also give you whatever is necessary for this earthly life?" I beg you to note these two beautiful words, *"Your Father,"* which must have evoked in the apostles, and ought to evoke in us, the tenderest and most boundless confidence. God is a Father—*our Father!* What a claim this is upon His trust and love! Jesus seems for a moment to forget Himself and to think only of His dear apostles, since He says, not *"our Father,"* but *"your Father,* your Father, because you are My loyal disciples."

Here it need hardly be observed that, to attain this kingdom, our co-operation is necessary, since such co-operation is insisted on in

every page of Holy Writ, and the apostles did so co-operate by following Christ and forming His first little flock. The kingdom of heaven is always promised on condition not only that men shall have faith and hope, which require little effort and trifling sacrifice, but also that they shall have charity and do the works of charity, which cost a great sacrifice. Among the apostles, to whom Christ promised the kingdom of heaven, was also Judas, and assuredly Judas did not possess it. And why? Solely because his works were not such as corresponded with the divine call and merited the divine promise.

The language of Christ here seems really strange. He exhorts His dear apostles, although few and very poor, to follow Him and to put aside all fear, because to them would be given the kingdom of heaven, and He at once adds: *"Sell what you possess and give alms."* Now how is this? If they were extremely poor, if they lived by the labor of their hands and by alms, what could they possess? What could they sell?

First of all it may be replied that although quite poor they might have owned a house or a little plot of ground, or a fisherman's boat and nets, or other things of which we can now know nothing. Next, Jesus Christ is speaking in general and His words are applicable not only to the apostles, but to all who shall be-

lieve in time to come and shall wish to follow Him, the most perfect exemplar, more closely and observe not His precepts alone, but His counsels also.

Jesus Christ says: *"Sell what you possess and give alms."* These words are seemingly a formal precept and forbid the ownership of any kind of property whatsoever; and so thought some heretics in time past and among them Arnold of Brescia, the Waldenses, Pelagius, and others, who said: "Jesus Christ has forbidden His ministers, priests of every rank, to own and possess the goods of earth; they must live from day to day on alms, as did Jesus Christ and His apostles."

There is no question that in this place Jesus is speaking of a counsel and not of a command, and this is clear from another passage of the Gospel, where He says: *"If* thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come, follow Me." The words: *"If thou wilt be perfect"* make a clear distinction between a *precept* and a *counsel;* the former is binding upon all, the latter only upon those who wish to rise to the sublimest heights of virtue. And how could Jesus Christ have denied His ministers the right to own property? Are they not men, and have they not the same rights that other men have? Have they not the same natural wants; do they not need food and

drink, clothing to cover them and a roof to shelter them? Have they not also a right to make all necessary provision against the future? Or is their labor to be esteemed less than that of other men? Certainly men may, if they will, following the pattern of Christ and of the apostles, renounce all right to own even things necessary to them, but there is no law either human, ecclesiastical, or divine, that can deny them that right. They *may,* but they *are not obliged* to make this renunciation.

And why is it more perfect to give up the goods of earth, and why did Jesus Christ give a counsel to do so? Because by giving up the goods of earth we rid ourselves of a thousand cares, are more detached from the world, and pursue more easily and with greater alacrity the path to heaven. One of the most formidable hindrances to serving God is a lawless love of the goods of earth, or of riches, since with riches we have wherewith to gratify our passions; whereas by becoming voluntarily poor we remove the hindrance these goods and riches place in our way and thereby remove, at least in a great measure, the danger of sinning and make easier our progress in saving our souls. This is why there has ever been in the Church, from the days of the apostles to our own, a great number of souls of both sexes, who to the observance of the precepts have added

the observance of the Gospel counsels. Never, then, listen to worldly-minded men, who condemn voluntary poverty as practised by Religious, and who assert that it is a disorder, a defect, and contrary to nature. Can what Jesus Christ, the apostles, and thousands of saints practised in every age and clime be censured and branded as a disorder, a defect, and contrary to nature? Even to entertain such a thought would be a horrid blasphemy. And are not men and women free to forego the right of owning and possessing property, and also free to put on the habit of a Religious, if they so will, and submit to be governed by a man or woman whom they freely choose? You claim liberty for all, liberty to choose whatever profession you like, and you have a full right to do so; why, then, will you deny this sacred right to Religious alone? One may serve another, no matter whom, in any capacity he likes; and may he not serve God in religion, by consecrating himself to prayer and penance, to teaching the young and ministering to the sick? Let there, then, be liberty to take up any profession, but liberty also to embrace any form of religious life.

It is a blessed thing that in the midst of this fever for getting rich there should be some noble souls who prefer to be poor; it is a blessed thing that in the midst of this hunger and thirst for

pleasure, of this wide-spread corruption of morals, there should be found here and there young men and maidens who gladly pursue the paths of virtue, and exhibit in themselves purity of soul and body in its most exalted form, by living the life of virgins, and who by making of themselves a most magnanimous sacrifice prove to what heights human nature may rise when borne up and sustained by grace; it is a blessed thing that in the midst of this frenzy for personal independence and of this delirium for unrestrained liberty, degenerating into license, there should be presented to the world patterns of the most perfect and joyous obedience, the obedience of Religious.

But I am unconsciously losing sight of my commentary; and in dwelling on the words of Christ: *"Sell what you possess and give alms,"* words that have filled and still fill Religious houses with elect souls, I am forgetting that I am writing a homily and not a book. Let us, then, retrace our steps and listen to Jesus Christ, who, continuing His discourse to the apostles, says: *"Make to yourselves bags that grow not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not."*

It was customary to keep money in little bags, or, as we say, in purses. Hence it was quite natural that they should look to it that these purses were not ripped or torn, so that there

should be no danger of losing the money contained in them. Our Lord, following His custom of using the most simple language of the people to lift their minds up to a knowledge of spiritual things, says in substance: "You toil to accumulate money; you put it into purses; you take every precaution to see that these are secure; now I will tell you a better way to lay by your money, a way by which it will be absolutely safe and not a penny of it will be lost. Give alms; lay by your money in the hands of the poor by feeding them, clothing them, housing them, in a word, by ministering to their needs, and be assured a farthing of it will not go astray. Nay, more, your money when put into the hands of the poor will grow to be an immense treasure, for it will earn for you a hundred per cent and this God Himself will pay you."

Nor is this all. Your treasure will never fail you: *"A treasure in heaven that faileth not."* Here on earth capital, even when seemingly best secured, is often wholly lost, owing to one of those many accidents which frequently occur and can not be foreseen, and he who is rich to-day is poor to-morrow, and this you know, my friends, as well as I. "But," Christ says, "this can not happen if you put your money in the hands of the poor, that is, of God Himself in heaven." Here thieves may rob you of

your money either forcibly or by deceit, but in heaven there are no thieves: *Where no thief approacheth.* Here below the moths may ruin your little bags or purses and the money they contain may in consequence be lost; but as in heaven there are neither thieves nor cheats so neither are there moths. By these two figures of the thief and the moth Our Lord wished to teach us that money converted into alms is secure against every danger and can not be lost: "*A treasure that faileth not.*"

My friends, learn from the words of Jesus Christ how valuable and excellent a thing it is to give alms, and how inestimable are the profits alms earn for us. Listen to the words of St. Peter Chrysologus on the subject: "Jesus Christ, while teaching us to despise riches, bids us to be avaricious . . . To what is His love for His dear disciples not equal? To gain the covetous He gives them what they desire. He bids them lay up eternal treasure, so that in seeking interest upon it they may acquire virtue. . . . He sees that they place their faith and hope in money, and hence He strives to get them to put their money in heavenly purses, that grow not old and that the moth will not destroy; so that, if they will not follow Him thither, they may follow their purses. Let, then, the covetous lay up money in their purses, and do so because God commands, thus abet-

ting their desires; but let them lay up the money by giving, for what the poor receive God receives. And where does God put it? In heaven. And that the covetous may not regret losing their interest they should bear in mind that on what they give the poor they will receive an hundred per cent. The world receives an hundred and gives one per cent; God receives one and give an hundred per cent; and yet men will not lend to God."[1]

And now for the last sentence: *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* Our heart, that is, our love, naturally goes out to the object or objects that enchant and captivate us. The heart is like the eye. Upon what does the eye rest? Upon those things whose color charms it, whose form and symmetry delight it. So also the heart turns, as does the lodestone to the pole, to those objects that fascinate and allure it, or, as does the opening flower, to the sun. Do riches attract you? Your heart will be constantly fixed upon them. Are honors and the applause of the world the objects of your ambition? They will be ever in your thoughts and in your hearts. Do the pleasures of the table, the gratification of the senses, an idle life, a longing for revenge, captivate you and cast a spell over you? If so your minds and hearts will be fixed upon them. Is

[1] Serm. xxv.

virtue, is God, the object of your thoughts, the motive and supreme end of your conduct; do you prize Him above everything else, do you seek Him first and before all things? If so your heart is consecrated to virtue and wholly given to God. Man lives where he loves, and the soul takes on the character and clothes itself with the vesture of the object loved, and hence it is either beautified by its beauty or deformed by its ugliness. Happy shall we be if we bring this simple and beautiful truth home to ourselves! We should ever desire to have only God, God alone as our treasure and the object of our love, and to have all other things only in the measure in which they are willed and loved by Him. In God are all the infinite treasures of wisdom, beauty, justice, holiness, and goodness; in Him as in a spring or source are all the beauties and all the perfections that we see displayed on land and sea and in the firmament above. Let God, then, be our sole treasure, let Him be ever in our thoughts and hearts for time and eternity. Amen.

HOMILY IX

Mass of Abbots

Os Justi, etc.

He was beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction. He made him like unto the saints in glory, and magnified him in the fear of his enemies; and with his words he made prodigies to cease. He glorified him in the sight of kings, and gave him commandments before his people, and showed him His glory. He sanctified him in his faith and meekness, and chose him out of all flesh. For He heard him and his voice, and brought him into a cloud. And He gave him commandments before His face, and the law of life and instruction.—*Ecclus.* vii. 44–50.

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus, which is a storehouse of moral teaching, the chapters from the forty-fourth to the fiftieth are devoted to a recital of the praises of the great men and saints who lived under the patriarchal and Mosaic Law, from Adam to Simeon, the son of the high-priest Onias. The Sacred Writer brings before us the great figures of the pa-

triarchs, of Enoch, Noe, and Abraham; then he goes on to Moses, Aaron, and Phineas; then follow Josue, Caleb, the Judges, and Samuel; next come Nathan, David, Solomon, Elias, Eliseus, Ezechias, Isaias, Jeremias, and Ezechiel; and the series closes with the minor prophets, Zorobabel, Nehemias, and the high-priest Simeon, during whose lifetime this Book appears to have been written.

Among these eminent personages Moses very naturally holds a distinguished place, for he was the legislator and liberator of God's people, and a luminous figure of Jesus Christ, the divine Liberator, Law-giver, and Saviour of the whole human race.

The words just read to you refer to Moses and are very properly applied by the Church in the Mass to the saint whose feast we celebrate to-day.

Following our usual method we shall explain them as best we can, meditate upon them and strive to derive from them food for our souls. "*He,*" Moses, "*was beloved of God and men.*" This is very high praise, and greater can not be given. A man who is dear to God and men, who is crowned with the glory of earth and heaven, has reached the highest pinnacle of greatness. There are men of exalted virtue who are dear to God, but upon whom the world heaps horrible outrages and insults; they are

beloved of God, but hated and detested by men, at least during their sojourn here on earth. There are men of name whom the world honors for their knowledge, real or apparent, and for their seemingly great works, but whom God, who alone sees the truth and judges accordingly, thrusts aside and casts off. Men who enjoy at once the praises of heaven and the admiration of the world, the love both of God and of men, are indeed very rare. Among these privileged few, dear to God and men, was Moses. He was dear to God because he was a man of faith, obedient and zealous for the glory of His name, because he was a man of prayer and ready for any sacrifice in carrying out the will of God; he was dear to men, to the people of Israel, because for them he wrought prodigies of charity, no matter at what cost to himself.

My friends, let us so live, so discharge the duties of our state in life, as to be beloved of God; and as far as in us lies let us endeavor to be also beloved of men by striving to procure for them every blessing, whether of soul or body.

Moses being dear to God and men could not help leaving a name that has been held in benediction, and hence the Sacred Text adds: "*Whose memory is in benediction.*" Assuredly we should not practise virtue, serve and love God, and do good to men in order to gain their approval, receive their praise, and

have our name in the mouths of all; woe to us if we do, for we shall hear this terrible sentence pronounced upon us by the divine Judge: *"I know you not. You have received your reward."* No matter what we do, our intention should ever be directed chiefly to God; for Him we must labor and drudge, for He alone deserves such service and to Him alone should we look for our reward. True, the approval and the praise of men may encourage us in well-doing, may be as a favorable gale that fills our sails and drives our vessel on its way, but the real power that impels it forward toward the port of eternity must be a desire to please God and do His will.

"The Lord made him like the saints in glory." Great and glorious were Enoch and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the other patriarchs, whose names are recorded in Holy Writ; and Moses was like unto them; nay I will dare affirm without fear of erring that he was greater than they, and this seems clear if we consider the mission that was committed to him and the marvelous works he accomplished during a long course of years in Egypt and in the desert. In this respect who among the patriarchs will bear comparison with him? As a liberator and educator of his people, as a worker of miracles, as one distinguished by strength of soul, by wisdom in governing, by the

favors he obtained from heaven, and by the ineffaceable impress he has left upon the Hebrew people, he has no equal in the whole history of the human race.

The Sacred Writer speaks specifically of the greatness of Moses under two heads, first, God made him a terror to his enemies: *"He magnified him in the fear of his enemies";* and next, God gave him the power of checking portentous calamities by his word: *"And with his words he made prodigies to cease."* We learn from Holy Writ that Moses by his word and by his unheard-of prodigies filled with amazement and terror the Egyptians, the Amalekites, the Amorites, and all the peoples of Chanaan; and we know also that by his word he smote Egypt with fear-inspiring plagues and by his word he made them cease.[1] Such power as that displayed by Moses had never been seen on earth.

The Sacred Text goes on celebrating the praises of Moses, saying: *"God glorified him in the sight of kings."* The kings here referred to are undoubtedly the pharaoh[2] of Egypt, the king of Amalek, of Basan, and of the Amorites,

1 "Monstrum a monstrando dictum est, vel monstrum, quod monstret futurum et moneat voluntatem eorum." (Pomponio Leto.) Virgil calls Cleopatra a prodigy, because on account of her gifts there was somewhat of the prodigious in her.

2 The word *pharaoh* is not the name of a king, but the designation of a dignity, like emperor, king, cæsar, kaiser, sultan, calif, etc.

whom Moses overthrew and humbled, an account of whom is given in the Pentateuch. These victories made the name of Moses famous also throughout all the neighboring nations.

Nor do the glories of Moses end here: *God gave him commandments in the sight of his people.* The Books of Exodus and Leviticus tell us that God called Moses unto Mount Sinai and there gave him the Law that he was to promulgate to the people. In this Law received by Moses from God, not only are the great moral precepts of the Decalogue determined, but all religious rites and the mode of procedure in civil and criminal causes are minutely specified, so that it can be said without exaggeration that the Law of Moses is a perfect and complete code for the regulation of the moral duties, sacred worship, and the civil and judiciary administration of the nation. Moreover, God often deigned to make known His will to Moses from the door of the Tabernacle in the presence of all the people. What a glory it was for Moses to receive directly from God Himself the entire code by which God's people were to be governed, that people in whose loins were borne the hopes of the patriarchs and from whom was one day to come the Saviour of the world.

But there is still another privilege, still another title to glory, which places Moses above all the patriarchs and which the Text

gives in these words: *"He showed him His glory."*

After Moses had heard the voice of God on Sinai and received from Him His Law, he besought God to deign to show him His face, that is, to lift the veil that conceals His infinite Essence. He was told that no man, as long as he dwells on this earth, can see God as He is, face to face: *"Thou canst not see My face, for man shall not see Me and live."* The uttermost term of all divine graces, even the greatest, is to lead us on to the beatific vision, which consists in seeing God as He is in Himself. Hence, as long as we live on this earth, as long as we are wayfarers here below, it is absolutely impossible to see God in Himself. We can see Him in and through the creatures which He has created and which He preserves; we can see Him as we see the sun through the clouds or through a smoked crystal, or as we see the face of a man or other object reflected in a mirror. We shall see God in Himself when this life comes to an end, when everything will be transformed, and when we shall be lifted up to such a height and to such perfection that we shall be able to endure so much glory.

What, then, did Moses see, when as the Sacred Text says, he saw God's glory? *"He showed him His glory."* He saw not God in Himself, but some marvelous manifestation of

Him; he saw it may be an angel, one of the highest, in whom the image of God shone resplendent; he saw a flash, a dazzling burst of light or glory; He saw in Scriptural language the shoulders of God: *"Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face thou canst not see."* [1]

God sanctified Moses by faith and meekness: *"He sanctified him in his faith and meekness."* Sanctity is the sum and substance of all virtues; it is man wholly loosed from all creatures and given solely to God. Moses was a saintly man and therefore adorned with all virtues carried to their utmost perfection. Here the Sacred Text refers to two of the principal and most characteristic virtues of the great lawgiver, namely, faith or fidelity and meekness: *"He sanctified him in his faith and meekness."* The mission that Moses received from God was supremely arduous and one to which the powers of man are wholly unequal. He an exile, poor, and a stammerer, was commissioned to liberate an entire people from a most horrible slavery

[1] St. Augustine and some other Fathers and interpreters think that Moses really saw the divine Essence, but this opinion is quite inadmissible, since it is at once contrary to the nature of things, because in the present order the human mind can not rise to the vision of spiritual things and can not see them except as phantoms, and contrary to the Sacred Text, where it is clearly said: *"Thou shalt see My back parts, but My face thou canst not see."* No matter what may be the meaning of *My back parts*, or *posteriora mea*, it is certain that the vision of God in His Essence is excluded.

in which they were held by one of the most powerful of monarchs. And this people, unarmed, utterly broken and dispirited, quarrelsome, fickle as children, at times cruel and ferocious, he was to conduct, in the face of infinite dangers, across the desert, to impose a law upon them, and to lead them to the conquest of the land of their fathers. Not to fail in so exalted and arduous an undertaking he must have had a firm and unbroken faith in the promises of God, for this alone could have sustained him and kept him faithful in the observance of the commandments he had received from Him. All this Moses possessed. Go through the five Books in which he has left us the story of his mission, of the conflicts he sustained, of the dangers he faced and overcame, of the sufferings he endured, and of all he accomplished from the day on which he presented himself to the Pharaoh in Egypt until the day on which he bade farewell to his people and disappeared from their sight, and tell me if it is possible to find a man who had a firmer faith in God than he had, or who more loyally corresponded to the call he had received from heaven. The Sacred Writer, then, was right in saying that Moses was *"most faithful in all My house,"* that is, in the government of all God's people.

My friends, let the figure of this marvelous man ever stand out luminous before our eyes.

Having his eyes fixed constantly on God he went straightforward on the path traced out for him; strong in the strength of his invincible faith, he overcame every obstacle, though seemingly insurmountable, that obstructed his way. It is ever faith in God, a steadfast faith in His word and in His promises that makes us victorious over all our enemies: *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith,"* because this faith unites us to God, binds us to Him and makes us participators of His very omnipotence, and hence Christ affirms in the Gospel that *"all things are possible to him that believeth"*; and again: *"If you have faith you shall say to the mountain: Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove."* The author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus praises not only the faith or fidelity of Moses, but also his meekness: *"He sanctified him in his meekness."*

Meekness! This winning and lovable virtue is the daughter of humility and charity; it keeps the mind tranquil, calm, and unaffected; the meek had rather suffer themselves than cause suffering in others; they have not a sharp tongue because they bear no ill will in their hearts.[1] Nature may predispose the soul to this virtue, but only grace and the constant exercise of patience can produce and preserve

[1] "Qui nullum perturbationis locum reliquerunt, hi demum mansueti appellantur." (S. Basilius, in Ps. xxxiii.)

it. St. Ambrose says that it is a stranger to anger, asperity, and bitterness, sweet and soothing to its possessor and beneficial to others.[1] Moses was a pattern of this virtue. How he bore with that stiff-necked people! How he dissembled his feelings when he saw them ungrateful! How often did that people for whom he was sacrificing his life disown him, threaten and outrage him! And still like a loving father he bore with them, went on admonishing them, pleading with them, and striving to bring them to a better mind. What charity! What meekness!

It may seem strange to some that Moses occasionally had recourse to force and used it, freely shedding blood to repress disorders. All this may seem excessive and in singular contrast with the meekness that is ascribed to him. More than once Moses employed arms to repress public disorders and he commanded that certain enemies should be exterminated. But it should be borne in mind that he never did this to defend his own person or to promote or protect his private interests; when provoked and when even his life was threatened, his only revenge was to have recourse to God. And even when God punished this restless, turbulent, and rebellious people Moses himself besought

1 "Mites sunt qui cedunt improbitatibus et non resistunt malo." (In Sermonem, apud A Lapide.)

Him to spare them and offered himself as a victim for them. It should be borne in mind, too, that only by such terrible repressive measures was it possible to govern this people, and that when they are necessary they are also just, and they in no sense detract from the meekness of the legislator. Had Moses acted otherwise, had he been kind when it was necessary to be severe, he would have done an injury to the whole people and failed of his duty. Meekness should never imperil the public safety, and when it does it is not a virtue, but a vice.

As to the fact that Moses did exterminate some people it is to be noted that he did this by the express command of God, the absolute Master of men; as He gives life, so He can take it away, when and as He wills, and no one has a right to ask why He does so. Moreover, we know that the people so fiercely pursued and smitten by Moses richly deserved this punishment; they were guilty of every sort of crime and given over to the most execrable superstitions and impieties, going the length even of sacrificing their own children to idols. We can say in all truth that the fact of Moses' having recourse to arms to curb and suppress the wicked does not in the least militate against his meekness, any more than do the frightful slaughter perpetrated at Jerusalem by Titus and the wars waged by Antoninus rob these

emperors of the right of being called pious and generous, titles which the world has unanimously bestowed upon them.

Let us go on with the commentary: "*God chose him out of all flesh.*" Many and various are the offices that are to be discharged on earth by men in God's name, whether in the natural or supernatural order. All authority and all power on earth, as Holy Writ teaches, come from God. Now as power and authority imply an office or a mission, and as all power and all authority come from God, it follows that to God alone belongs the right to choose and to call those who are to exercise this power and authority. Who chooses and appoints the officers of an army? The head of the army. Who chooses and appoints governors and magistrates to administer justice and preserve public order? The head of the State. Who appoints their respective offices to priests? The bishop in his diocese and the Supreme Pontiff throughout the whole Church. And whence the supreme power of the Pontiff and of the head of the State? From God, who through them distributes it to others; and hence to them belongs the right to commit, either directly or by others, to each one his office and to entrust to each his mission. God himself called Moses and entrusted to him the exalted mission, which he most faithfully executed.

God might have entrusted that sublime mission to any one to whom He saw fit to give it; He saw fit to entrust it to Moses and in entrusting it to him He necessarily gave him the graces and aids which the mission called for. Had Moses merited the honor of receiving so great a mission? Certainly not; it was, then, the gift, purely the gift of God, as was that of the apostolate also God's gift, for Jesus said to them: *"I have chosen you, you have not chosen Me."* When, therefore, an office is conferred upon us or a mission entrusted to us, no matter what the character of either, we should bear in mind that it comes from God, that it is His gift, and hence we should not be puffed up over it, rather we should be inspired with fear, knowing that we shall have to render an account to Him of our administration of the trust.

The inspired writer goes on to mention another title to glory, another privilege granted to Moses, for he says that Moses heard God's voice and that God made him enter into a cloud: *"For he"* (Moses) *"heard Him and His voice, and He brought him into a cloud."* These words evidently refer to the incident narrated in the Book of Exodus where Moses heard God's voice and was bidden by Him to go up into Sinai. Has God, then, a voice such as men here on earth? No, for He has not hands or feet or eyes, as we have, though all these are

ascribed to Him in Holy Writ; so neither has He a voice after the manner of men. God being, as the Catechism teaches, a most pure Spirit, has not a human voice, this being proper only to beings who have bodies. What voice, then, was that which Moses heard? Since God is a most perfect Spirit, He has not as such a human voice, but since He is omnipotent He can cause any sort of voice or sound He wills to be heard. Is it not He who gives to man his voice? Why, then, should He not be able to make man hear a voice, either by Himself producing the voice, He being the Cause of causes, or by making use of some other creature as His instrument? It would really seem that the voice heard by Moses was the voice of an angel, through whom God spoke. Let us repeat here what we have so often said: We men are beings of sense, and only by things of sense can we rise to what is above and beyond sense and to what is spiritual. This is why God in communicating with man always employs sensible things or instruments; and this, too, is one of the chief reasons why wishing to become the teacher of men, He went the length of taking upon Him their nature and of making Himself like to man in all things, sin alone excepted. There is, of course, no doubt but that God could have made His will known to Moses and have called him by an interior voice, by one

of those many intimations by which He reveals Himself with absolute certainty without any sort of external manifestation. But in that case Moses alone would have known the will of God and heard His voice, but not so the people, and it was fitting that they, too, should hear it and thus be prepared to receive His Law.

Moses heard God's voice and went up into the mountain, which was enveloped in cloud, covered with darkness, and about which the lightnings flashed and the thunders roared: "*He brought him into a cloud.*" The cloud was a real cloud, the darkness a real darkness, and so also were the lightnings and thunder real, and they filled the people with terror. Why did God wish to indicate His presence in this particular way? The reason is the same as that to which we have so often adverted, namely, to teach us that if we will draw near to God and unite ourselves to Him we must separate ourselves from all created things; if we would hear God's voice the voices of men round about us must be hushed. God envelopes Himself, or rather the manifestation of His presence, in that august and fear-inspiring display to give us to understand and to make us feel how great and majestic He is, and to make us more willing and ready to obey the law that He has promulgated.

It is a matter well worthy of consideration that between the manifestation of God to Moses and Elias in the Old Testament and the transfiguration of Christ in the New there are points strikingly similar. Both the one and the other took place on a mountain; from both the crowd was kept at a distance; in both the mountain and spectators were wrapped in cloud; in both the voice of God was heard; in the latter the same two persons appeared, who in some way saw God in the former. Possibly it may be said and believed that in the manifestations of the Old Testament Moses and Elias saw the Word shadowed forth in the human form that He was to assume later on in the fulness of time, and thus the two manifestations are intimately linked together.

"*And God gave Moses commandments before His face, and a law of life and instruction.*" The words *before His face,* or face to face, are not to be taken to mean that Moses saw God in His infinite nature, this being impossible in the present order of things; they mean only that God in giving the law to Moses manifested Himself to him in the most perfect way possible, as friend to friend. This law is called the Law of *life* because it was intended to lead to life all who received and observed it; and the law of *instruction,* because its purpose was to give a practical knowledge of whatever man

must do or omit to please God and attain life everlasting.

If you ask me how God gave the Law to Moses, I reply that He gave it to him either by directly illuminating his mind and moving his will to write it, as we hold He did in the case of nearly all the inspired writers; or by causing Moses materially to hear His will in some one of the ways that are possible to Him; and I am inclined to believe that He gave Moses the Law in this latter way, because this seems more in keeping with the narrative Moses himself has left us.

I will make two observations and bring this Homily to an end. This passage of Ecclesiasticus, which refers to Moses, the Church in the Mass of this day applies to the holy abbot, whose memory we celebrate. What connection or relation is there between Moses and the holy abbot whom we honor to-day? Moses was the legislator, the guide, the teacher, and the loving father of the chosen people, whom he liberated from Egyptian slavery and conducted to the very portals of the promised land, a figure of the heavenly country. The holy abbot whose feast we celebrate was the legislator, guide, teacher, and loving father of an army of elect souls, who voluntarily gathered about him, and whom he liberated from the snares of the world

and conducted to the portals of heaven; he was the Moses of his Religious.

That Law which Moses received from God Himself, is in its substantial part, namely, the Decalogue, which was solemnly confirmed by Christ in the Gospel, a Law of *life* and *instruction,* and obliges us all without exception. *If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.* This is the gate of heaven. Therefore let us scrupulously and faithfully observe this holy Law, and we shall have life.

HOMILY X

Mass of Abbots

THEN Peter answering said to Him: Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have? And Jesus said to them: Amen I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting.—*Matt.* xix. 27–29.

IT IS not easy to determine where or when Our Lord delivered this discourse, but it seems most likely that He delivered it on His last journey from Galilee to Judea, when, as we learn from the beginning of the chapter, "He went into the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan." The time would seem to be the autumn preceding His death. Now let us inquire

what was the occasion that led Jesus to utter the words we are about to explain, for this will throw a flood of light upon their meaning.

A young man had asked Jesus what he must do to be saved, and Jesus had replied, *"Keep the commandments,"* and went on to specify which. The young man answered: *"All these have I kept from my youth; what is yet wanting to me?"* Jesus said to him: *"If you will be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me. The young man went away sad, for he had great possessions."* Then turning to the apostles Jesus began to speak of how very difficult it is for the rich to be saved, and uttered this frightful sentence: *"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."* On hearing these words the disciples were appalled and said: *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus, looking upon them, to encourage them said: *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* Here Peter asked the question that elicited the reply of Christ; both the question and the reply are given in the three verses just read to you, which will be the subject of this Homily.

Jesus Christ by the words: *"Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me,"* had called the rich young man to a life

of perfection, and he on hearing them went away sad. Then Jesus uttered this fear-inspiring sentence: *"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."* Whereupon Peter, applying to himself and to his companions the first half of the sentence uttered by the Divine Master: *"Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me,"* rising said in his straightforward, frank, and almost rude way, and with a freedom which Our Lord seems to have permitted in his case: *"Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee; what, therefore, shall we have?"* Peter made three affirmations in these words, each distinct from the others; first, he said: *"We have left all things;* we have given up everything for Thy sake"; next: *"We have followed Thee";* and finally: *"What therefore shall we have?* What reward wilt Thou give us?"

Let us dwell a little on these words of Peter. First of all he protests that they had given up everything. What did he have to give up? He gave up his boat and his nets, with which he earned a livelihood, and possibly also he gave up a small cottage and a little plot of ground, if indeed he was fortunate enough to possess these. Nor does the Gospel say that he sold all these and gave the proceeds to the poor, as

Christ had explicitly commanded. And note also that Peter speaks both in his own name and in that of his companions, saying: *"We have left all things."*

True, Peter was only a poor fisherman, and in giving up everything he had he gave up very little. But, as St. Gregory says, and as St. Augustine had said before him, he who gives up everything he possesses, gives up a great deal, since he has stripped himself of all things. We know, too, that the poor peasant is as much attached to his little cabin and plot of ground as is the millionaire to his palace, his vast possessions, and his magnificent country home, and hence the sacrifice made by him who gives up little is very frequently greater than the sacrifice made by him who gives up much, for sacrifice is measured by the attachment we have to the things we give up. Hence the sacrifice made by Peter and his companions was great, though the things they surrendered for Christ were trifling and of little value. And does not Christ say in the Gospel that the poor widow who put two mites into the treasury cast in more than all the rich, who had cast in large sums?

Moreover, we should bear in mind what St. Augustine says: "Peter not only gave up for good and all the little he possessed, but he also relinquished the desire and the power of ever

at any time acquiring worldly goods. How many poor," he goes on, "who have nothing, cherish the hope of gaining money and growing wealthy? How many, so poor that they possess nothing, are rich in desire and burning with the fever of avarice? Peter and his companions not only relinquished all things, which indeed might have been easy enough, but they also renounced all hope of ever possessing anything; they put between themselves and the world an impassable gulf, and each said to his will: Henceforth, not only shalt thou possess nothing, but thou shalt not even desire to possess anything whatsoever. And is not this the greatest possible sacrifice? Is not this truly to give up all things?" [1]

And here it may not be out of place to make an observation. Worldly-minded men are accustomed to sneer and scoff at those who live in the cloister, and in fact at all who take upon them a life of evangelical poverty. "Look at them," they say with an air of contempt and scorn, "look at these men who profess to practise evangelical poverty. They never want for anything; they have a roof to cover them, comfortable cells, a well, and at times even a lav-

[1] "Petrus non solum dimisit quidquid habebat, sed etiam quidquid habere cupiebat. Quis autem pauper non turgescit in spe saeculi hujus? Quis non quotidie cupit augere quod habet? Ista cupiditas praecisa est." (In Psal. ciii, apud A Lapide.)

ishly-supplied table; they have only to ask for clothing and they obtain it; they have all the conveniences of a splendid establishment and suitable diversions; they are exempt from all the cares of the world, and they are better off than many who live in the world; it can be said of them that: *Having nothing they possess all things.* Under pretext of practising evangelical poverty they have found the secret of enjoying all the comforts that wealth can purchase, without the cares and annoyances that are the accompaniment of wealth. Poor in the world, by entering religion they become rich. How many live in the world who endure hunger, who labor and have not wherewith to cover their nakedness, who toil in the sweat of their brow and have not whereon to lay their head! The really poor," they add, "are not those who live in religion, but those who live in the world." To listen to these men one would be led to believe that the life of Religious is not a life of poverty and self-denial, but one of ease and enjoyment.

I do not deny that those who live in religion are provided with all things necessary, and at times even with comforts, and that in a sense the phrase of St. Paul, *having nothing and possessing all things,* may apply to them. But granting that this is all true, that Religious want for nothing and live contented and happy,

as it is affirmed, how does it happen that men of the world do not crowd the doors of cloisters and the houses of Religious seeking to enter there? How does it happen that so few come knocking at the doors of the houses of Religious begging to be admitted? How does it come that of every ten that enter there five leave after having made trial of that manner of life, declaring that they find themselves quite unable to put up with it? There must, then, be in houses of Religious privations, sacrifices, and hardships that are greater by far than the conveniences and comforts to be found there and of which the world is ever giving us such rosy stories. And what are these privations, sacrifices, and discomforts, that make a religious life hard and deter so many from embracing it, or from persevering after they have made trial of it? Those who enter *Religious houses* must give up the pleasures of the world; they must live a celibate life, which of itself is quite a trial; but besides being celibates they must observe the rule of poverty, which forbids them to own property and allows them only the necessary use of it; then again they must take upon themselves the rule of obedience, which is the supreme rule of Religious and a summary of all others. The fact of not being able to acquire, sell, or dispose of property; of being allowed only to use things when and as another may

direct; of not being able to say, "This is mine and I can do with it as I please without asking leave of any one"; of not being able to go and come, and do as one likes without the assent of a man or a woman into whose keeping one has given his or her will; of being always and in all things totally and in one's inmost heart dependent upon the will of another—all this utter surrender of one's will, of which one is so tenacious and sensitive, implies a continuous sacrifice, a continuous struggle, a continuous suffering and dying to oneself, compared with which all other sacrifices are light and trifling and easily borne. This is why the religious life, even when and where it provides certain material advantages, is embraced by few, for it is ever a life of self-denial, a painful life, and one associated with sacrifices more or less burdensome and trying.

I must ask pardon for this digression, which as times are has seemed to me neither useless nor inopportune. Now let us go back to Peter, who having confidently said: "*Behold we have left all things,*" adds, "*And have followed Thee.*" St. Jerome, commenting on this passage, says that the first part of the apostle's words, *Behold we have left all things,* was put in practice, rarely indeed, but still was put in practice by some Pagan philosophers. We know that some of them, hoping thus to facili-

tate the acquisition of human wisdom, lived celibate lives, rid themselves of the cares of earthly things, and put themselves under obedience to some celebrated master. This they may have done out of caprice or vanity or from some other human motive. But the other half of the passage: *"And have followed Thee,"* has been in time past and is now observed only by the apostles and those who believe in Christ. To follow Christ! What does it imply? It implies that we must copy His life, exercise the virtues that He exercised, and with the intention He ever had in exercising them, namely, of giving glory to His Father and of saving souls. To give up everything for Christ and to make our lives and conduct a copy of His, is the height of sanctity, and can be the result only of faith and divine grace.

What was the answer of Jesus to these frank words of the apostle? *"Amen I say to you that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* A splendid promise this, given to the apostles and in their persons to others. Jesus begins His answer by saying: *"Amen I say to you,"* thus giving to His words a special force and solemnity, which He did only when speaking of more important truths or facts. "Peter,

you ask in your name and in that of your brother apostles what reward you will receive for having left all things and followed Me. I say to you and to your brothers, and note it well, that in the *regeneration* you will sit with Me as judges of all Israel." You will observe that the reward promised will not be given in this present life,[1] but in the life to come, at the end of time, on the day of general judgment. And that day is rightly called a *regeneration,* for then will all things be transformed and renewed; the earth and the heavens will be renewed, our souls and bodies will be renewed, and we shall be able to look with the eyes of the mind upon the incommunicable light of the divine Essence.[2] Then the Son of man, the man by excellence, Jesus Christ, flashing with light and in all the majesty of His glory will judge all men and render to every one according to his works. That will undoubtedly be the day of His triumph. The apostles who followed Him, who were His companions during His life on earth, who shared His sufferings and His hu-

[1] Some think that by the word *regeneration,* used by Christ, Baptism, the sacrament of regeneration, is meant, but it is so clear as to need no demonstration that there is here question of the resurrection and of judgment, and not of Baptism.

[2] The judgment will take place on the earth; and why may not the earth be transformed into heaven and be the abiding-place of the blessed? Everywhere God manifests Himself is heaven, and can He not manifest Himself on earth, as well as elsewhere?

miliations, will have a glory like to His own and will be judges together with Him. Evidently the reply was addressed to the twelve apostles, a number that at once suggests and calls up to memory the twelve tribes of Israel; and as in the twelve apostles we should recognize not them alone, but also all who were to follow Christ as they did, so also in the twelve tribes, named here, we should recognize all nations and peoples that shall be judged by God.

Will, then, all the just be judges on that great day? Yes, and they shall be such in the measure in which they are more or less like unto Christ, for in this likeness to Him consists sanctity and therefore the glory that is the fruit of sanctity. And will they all sit each upon a throne? You all very well know that the blessed souls with their glorified bodies have no need of seats or thrones. Among us here below on earth the dignity and office of judges are necessarily associated with majestic surroundings, with a tribunal and seats from which justice is administered; so also in speaking of Christ and of the saints, who will be judges on that day, we necessarily speak of seats and thrones; such language is indispensable for us here on earth, but it should not be taken in a material sense.

And how will all the just judge on that day?

They will not form judgments by asking questions, by making inquiries, by arguing and adducing proofs; all this would be ludicrous and unworthy the majesty of Christ and of His saints; they will see all things and judge all things in a flash, or as St. Paul says, *in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye.* How, then, will this judgment of Christ and His saints, which Holy Writ tells us will be a real judgment, be carried on and completed? It is difficult to say, but I will speak out what I think as to how it is most likely to take place.

God is infinite light, and in that light are enshrined all truths, and these truths He causes those to see who are fit and worthy to see them; just as the sun contains in itself all colors, and causes all those to see them who have eyes capable of looking at them. Every soul should be a mirror in which the image of God is reflected; and thus He remaining one and immutable in Himself, is, as we should say, increased and multiplied as many times as He is reflected in the souls that receive His light. The just and the saints are as so many bright mirrors in which truth, put to account by works, shines forth and confounds and puts to shame the impious and sinners, who in those souls see their own condemnation. Say that a man all deformed, filthy, and disgusting enters a large room the walls of which are covered with

countless mirrors; no matter where he looks the mirror is there before him and he sees himself everywhere; he is annoyed, confused, ashamed, and casts his eyes upon the floor; every one of those mirrors is a silent witness against him, accuses and condemns him. And so also will the just be on the day of general judgment; by their very presence, by the blinding light that will encompass them, without uttering a single word, they will in an instant judge and condemn the reprobate.

Our Lord in this passage speaks only of the judgment that will be passed on the twelve tribes of Israel: *Judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Will not other nations and peoples be subjected to the same judgment? It would be stupid to doubt it, since it is an article of faith that all men, none excepted, shall be judged. Christ names the twelve tribes of Israel, but He does not exclude other peoples; in naming the twelve tribes He includes all believers, and He specifically names these because their judgment will be more severe, since they, having been specially favored, were nevertheless intractable, stubborn, and ungrateful, and therefore more culpable.

Christ ends His reply with a splendid statement which reveals in the clearest manner the reward that awaits those who follow Him by making the Gospel counsels the rule of their life.

He says: *"Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess everlasting life."* Note well these words: *"For My name's sake."* There may be, and unfortunately there are some, who to the scandal and grief of all good men, forsake home and brother and sister, father, mother, and children, but never their property, and wander away into distant countries, either to seek a fortune, or to escape the cares of a family, or to be freer to indulge their passions without let or hindrance. Fathers and husbands who abandon wives and children, sons who abandon their aged parents, to roam through the world and gratify their evil desires, are like the prodigal in the Gospel. Alas, they do not forsake those, who should be dear to them, *for the sake of Jesus Christ,* that is, because they love to dedicate themselves to the service of their suffering brethren, but, on the contrary, because they are wickedly selfish, and their conduct is both impious and detestable. To forsake home and to leave those we most tenderly love, when God calls us, is something just and holy, since we owe everything to God and every other right, no matter how sacred, ought, as you know, to be sacrificed to the right He has over us; but to forsake them when the divine law bids us

stay with them, to forsake them that thereby we may the more easily gratify our miserable passions, is a sin and a crime that can not be sufficiently reprobated. All honor to those magnanimous maidens, to those intrepid young men, who, docile to the silent voice of God within them, give up home and parents, brothers and sisters, to go into hospitals and orphanages, into schools and homes for the poor, there to serve the sick and the helpless, to teach the little ones of Christ, to become mothers to the orphans and the homeless; all honor to those who go fearlessly into the midst of savages in order to civilize and evangelize them—all such are heroes and heroines of charity. But shame upon those children who abandon their parents, upon those parents who abandon their children, upon husbands who desert their wives, from a desire of being free and from a frenzy for enjoyment, having only one longing, that of following their own caprices and of throwing off every restraint that is a check upon the vilest of passions.

Let those magnanimous souls, who to obey God make the most painful sacrifices, be comforted: *"They shall receive an hundred-fold,"* not indeed an hundred-fold of those things they have given up for Jesus Christ, as if for one house or field relinquished they would get an hundred in return, which would be but a

wretched recompense, since such things are all of the earth earthy, but a reward an hundred times greater and more excellent, namely, God Himself.[1] Instead of worldly and temporal goods, cast aside for love of God, they will receive spiritual and eternal, which latter, as St. Jerome says, are to the former in worth and excellence as a hundred to one.

And what this hundred-fold is Jesus Christ goes on to explain: *"He shall possess life everlasting."* In Holy Writ *life everlasting* is a compendious expression for the sum total of all heavenly goods; complete and perfect felicity, the possession of God Himself, this is the hundred-fold.

You have heard me affirm a hundred times over, and I repeat again that fundamental truth, that we can not and must not place our hopes in the things of earth, but in the things of heaven; not in the perishable and fleeting things we see, but in the imperishable and everlasting things we see not; that great truth, that we are not for earth but for heaven; that we have not here an abiding home, but seek for

[1] Some Fathers and interpreters put a different sense on the word *hundred-fold;* they say that those who for love of God give up the goods of earth will receive more from the charity of the faithful than what they forsook; that they will have joys on this earth that will more than compensate them for those they relinquished, etc. To me this seems like quibbling.

one that is to come; that we have gone out from Egypt, the land of bondage, and are traveling on toward the land of promise, toward heaven, the true promised land.

HOMILY XI

Mass of a Virgin and Martyr

Loquebar, etc.

I will give glory unto Thee, O Lord, my king, and will praise Thee, O God my Saviour. I will give glory to Thy name: for Thou hast been a helper and a protector to me, and hast preserved my body from destruction, from the snare of an unjust tongue, and from the lips of them that forge lies: and in the sight of them that stood by Thou hast been my helper. And Thou hast delivered me, according to the multitude of the mercy of Thy name, from them that did roar, prepared to devour; out of the hands of them that sought my life, and from the gates of the afflictions which encompassed me about. From the oppression of the flame which surrounded me, and in the midst of the fire I was not burned; from the depth of the belly of hell, and from an unclean tongue, and from lying words, from an unjust king, and from a slanderous tongue. My soul shall praise the Lord even to death: because Thou, O Lord our God, deliverest them that wait for

Thee, and savest them out of the hands of the nations.—*Ecclus.* li. 1–12.

MY FRIENDS, this is the first part of the prayer with which the Book of Ecclesiasticus ends. The Church directs that it shall be read in the Mass of this day, the feast of a virgin and martyr. In listening to these words, so full of faith, gratitude, and love, to this hymn of praise and thanksgiving, we can almost fancy that we are listening to a Psalm, to one of those that came forth from the burning heart of the prophet David.

We know not who was the author of this Book of Ecclesiasticus, but from the Book itself and from ancient memorials worthy of credence, we may safely infer that he was an inhabitant of Jerusalem, was thoroughly acquainted with the Law and the prophets, that he had made many journeys, and had suffered many persecutions, out of which God in His goodness delivered him. He was called Jesus or Joshua, a name not uncommon among the Hebrews. He lived in an evil age, at a time of severest trial for the Hebrew people, when they were harassed and cruelly persecuted by the neighboring Gentile nations and princes. Who were those neighboring nations and princes that so severely afflicted the people of God? There seems to be no doubt that they were the kings

of Egypt and Syria, possibly both simultaneously, and that the period to which reference is made was that of the Machabees, which was both calamitous and glorious.

But putting aside the discussion of these historical questions, let us meditate together this morning on this marvelous prayer, said to be that of Jesus, the son of Sirach, which the Church puts into the mouth of the virgin and martyr whom we honor to-day and whom God led on to safety and victory through the most frightful trials and the most cruel torments.

Our author, having through the mercy and goodness of God escaped from danger and been delivered from the direst persecution, turns to God, from whom comes every grace and blessing, and with ardent affection thus begins his prayer: *"I will give glory unto Thee, O Lord, my king."* No matter in what condition of life man finds himself, whether sailing toward port with a favorable wind, or tossed about on the waves of an angry sea that threatens to engulf him in its depths, he ought always to rise above the things of this earth, fix his eyes on God, and bless and thank Him, since He is his lord, his absolute king, his loving father, who directs all for his good, whether joy or sorrow, peace or war, honor or dishonor: *"I will give praise to Thee, O Lord."* The inspired writer also calls God *his king.* At that time the hand of a

hostile king, as it seems, was laid heavily both upon him and upon his people, and in fullest confidence he cries to God: "Thou art my Lord and my King, Thou art the King of kings, even of this king who lays a heavy hand upon me, and in Thee, the one almighty King, do we place all our hope."

"*And I will praise Thee and give glory to Thy name, O God, my Saviour.* This king of earth is not, and can not be, my Saviour; on the contrary he is my oppressor and the oppressor of my people; whom can he save, since he is a man, as I am, and like me subject to death and needing salvation?" My friends, let us beware of putting our trust in men, for they of themselves can do nothing; and even the little they can do for us, they can do only in the measure in which God gives them power to do it; and hence to Him alone are due honor and praise: "*I will praise Thee, O God, my Saviour.*"

It will be noted that a man, when his heart is powerfully swayed by a feeling of admiration, gratitude, and love, goes on giving expression to it over and over again, now in the same and now in different words, but it is ever the same note with variations, like a harmony that keeps on recurring in a song. Observe a mother gazing lovingly upon her babe; she takes it to her bosom, kisses it and cries out: "How fond I am of you; I love you, I adore

you, my treasure, my beautiful one, my life." All these words and acts are but varied expressions of the one sentiment of ardent love for her babe. So also our author in this passage; his heart is overflowing with gratitude and love toward God and he goes on giving vent to his feelings in various forms of expressions, all of which are but repetitions of the same thought: "I will praise Thee; I will give Thee glory, O my God and Saviour; I will give thanks to Thy name."

And why? *"For Thou hast been a helper and protector to me.* I am poor and weak and faltering, I am nothing; I am but a leaf that yields to a breath of air; I am but a feather whirled along by a current of wind; but Thou hast borne me up, Thou hast been my defence and safety. Be Thy name forever praised!"

This is the language of souls that live by faith, the language that ought to be often upon our lips, especially in seasons of trial: *"Thou, O Lord, art my helper, Thou art my protector."*

With his thoughts still fixed on God the author of the prayer continues: *"Thou, O Lord, hast preserved my body from destruction."* Here the man of God alludes to a danger that threatened his life and from which he had escaped, but what this danger was, or where it menaced him we do not know, and yet it must have been well known to those to whom the

Book of Ecclesiasticus was addressed. He attributes to God the providence of having escaped the death of the body, and there is no reason why we should not believe that God directly intervened to save him, as He did in the case of the three youths, whom He saved from the fires of the Babylonian furnace; yet it may be, and this is more likely, that he was saved by one of those special providences by which God accomplishes His purposes through the agency of others; thus Joseph was liberated from prison at the suggestion of the cup-bearer of Pharaoh, and Moses was rescued from the waters of the Nile, of course by God, but by means of Pharaoh's daughter. He who reasons and lives by faith always sees a providence in human affairs; and in the benefits he receives from man he always recognizes the hand of God, which directs and governs all things; and hence he gives God thanks also for those benefits that come to him directly from creatures or secondary causes. Is a sick man restored to health by a physician and by medicines? He thanks God, and rightly, since both the physician and the medicines are the creations of God, and both the skill of the former and the virtue of the latter come from Him alone. Does a seasonable shower fall upon fields burned up by the sun and give an assurance of an abundant crop? The pious farmer

blesses God, who created the waters and so directs the movements of the winds that they bank up the clouds, which, following the laws of nature, condense, and are precipitated in rain. All things are the creations of God; so also has He established the laws by which all things are governed; to Him therefore must all effects be referred as to the First Cause; Him must we thank and bless, placate and entreat. If a servant drops an alms into the hand of a beggar, are not thanks due to the servant's master? God is our primal, our greatest benefactor; men and things are the instruments He employs.

And Jesus, the son of Sirach, goes on: "Not only, O Lord, hast Thou preserved my body from destruction, Thou *hast also preserved my soul from the snare of an unjust tongue and from the lips of them that forge lies.*" Man has a two-fold life, the life of his body and the life of his good name or honor; and to men of keen sensibility, who have a proper appreciation of their dignity, the latter is far dearer than the former. The life of honor is damaged and slain especially by what St. Augustine calls the sword of the tongue. It seems quite certain that our saint had been made a target for atrocious calumnies by men who were masters in the art of forging them, and that he was fully exonerated and purged of these imputations. Nor is this to be wondered at, my friends. It

would be difficult to find on this earth a man who has escaped the poisoned tooth of detraction and slander. Even the Saint of saints, Jesus Christ, did not escape it; He was called a subverter of the people, a rebel to Cæsar, a transgressor of the Law and an evil-doer; how, then, can we with all our defects hope to escape it? Let us pursue a straight course, turning neither to the right nor to the left, and giving no occasion for sinister judgments; and if the ignorant or the malicious wickedly put a wrong interpretation upon our conduct, seeing evil where there is only good, and publicly branding us as culpable, when our conscience bears us witness that we are innocent, let us lift our eyes to heaven, confident that there is there on high One who will protect us and who in His own good time will free us from the snare of perverse tongues and from lips that forge calumnies. God's justice may be tardy, but it never fails; and, if not here on this earth, then on the solemn day of retribution He will render to every one his due.

The words that follow: "*And in the sight of them that stood by Thou hast been my helper,*" supplement those that precede. "My enemies," the saint says in his prayer, "encompassed me on every side; they were about to take my life by brute force and the sword; they were blighting my good name by evil report,

and I saw no escape. Then, O Lord, Thou didst come to my aid and my enemies were scattered.

"*And Thou hast delivered me, according to the multitude of the mercy of Thy name, from them that did roar, prepared to devour.*" It is, as you see, the same truth that is constantly recurring under a variety of forms; now it is perils and enemies that are gathering about him; and again it is God, who is invoked and who in His great mercy comes to his aid and rescues him. It is worth while to note this beautiful phrase, which occurs so frequently in the Sacred Books: "*According to the multitude of Thy mercy.*" It brings home to us the thought of the goodness, or the mercy of God, which seems to be the first and the greatest of His perfections. To be sure all the divine perfections are infinite and therefore equal, and His mercy is not of itself, and can not be, greater than His justice. How comes it that we are told that His mercy overcomes His justice and is above all the works of His hands, that this attribute is magnified in preference to others, and that God in the text is said to take His name from His mercy? Because goodness and mercy are pre-eminently attributes of God and His Essence: *God is love;* because He glories in these attributes; because His mercy and His goodness are visible and lavishly

displayed in all creation; and because, granting the Incarnation, His mercy is an attribute that especially befits Him; God of His very nature is all goodness and mercy, and if He exercises justice, it is, so to say, as St. John Chrysostom observes, because we constrain Him to do so. Oh, my friends, we should never forget, and it is a great comfort to us to remember it, that the goodness of God is great and beyond measure and that from this attribute He takes His name: *"Merciful, compassionate, the Father of mercies."*

Thanks to this mercy the Holy Writer was saved from the lions that went about roaring ready to devour him. In the Sacred Books enemies are designated by the name of lions to show their strength and ferocity; in many passages Saul is called a lion by David, whose life he sought; St. Paul called Nero a lion; and St. Peter calls the devil a lion, borrowing the expression used in the passage we are explaining: *"Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour."* How many of these raging lions there are roaring all round us, their frightful and ravenous jaws open to devour us! The world with its scandals, the flesh with its passions, all demons, are so many lions, frenzied by the rage of hunger, ever ready to throw themselves upon us. Daniel in the lion's den was not exposed

to a greater peril. Our hope in the midst of such danger lies wholly in the goodness of God, who alone can save us from the hands of those who seek our soul. "He alone," says the son of Sirach, "was able to save *me from the gates of afflictions which compassed me about.*"

To some it may seem strange that our author speaks of *the gates of affliction,* and they may ask themselves why these words are used. We should remember that the Hebrews held their courts under or at the gates of the city, and that there the accused were either absolved or condemned. The Sacred Writer by these words informs us that he was accused and brought before the gates, that there he endured the afflictions of which he speaks from unjust tongues and lips that forged lies; and that from thence he went forth acquitted and a free man.

Nor is this all. Our saint goes on to thank God for having rescued him, not only from calumnies and courts, but also "*from the oppression of the flames that surrounded him,*" and adds, "*that in the midst of the fire he was not burnt.*" It may be that by these words the sacred writer thanks and blesses God for having saved him from the flames to which he was to have been condemned by the judge; or for having miraculously drawn him out unhurt after he had been cast into them; but I rather think it more likely that these flames, from

which he came forth unharmed, mean generally the cruel and severe sufferings and persecutions he endured and which, aided by God's grace, he was able successfully to bear up against. And as a matter of fact fire, which is an instrument of torture greater than man can endure, is frequently used in Holy Writ as a figure of the pains and afflictions of this life.

In the next verse, as is often done in Hebrew, the writer sums up what has already been said, in order thus the more clearly to show the greatness of the benefit received and the duty of giving thanks to God: *"And He delivered me from the depths of the belly of hell."* Any one not wholly unfamiliar with Scripture language knows that the word "hell" very frequently signifies, not hell properly so-called, but a place under ground, or a tomb, and such is its meaning here. Jesus of Sirach pours forth the most ardent thanks to God for having delivered him from death, or from the grave that was opened to receive him, *"from an unclean tongue, from lying words"* or testimonies, *"from an unjust king, and from a slanderous tongue."*

As I said at starting, this prayer, with which the Book of Ecclesiasticus ends, has the structure and characteristics of the Psalms, which repeat the same thought over and over again, and which are for the most part prayers either of

praise and thanksgiving, or of adoration, addressed directly to God; or they are invitations calling upon the people to praise, thank, and adore Him. And of this we have an instance and a proof in the verse that follows: *"My soul shall praise the Lord even to death.* As long as the breath of life is left in me, as long as I shall remain upon earth, even until I go down into the grave, into the depths of the belly of hell, Thy praise, O Lord, shall ever be upon my lips." Since our very life is one continuous, perennial benefit of the good God, so should it be a continuous, perennial hymn and canticle of thanksgiving to so great a benefactor. Are our lives such, my friends? Let your consciences make answer.

In the passage of Ecclesiasticus read in the Mass of this day the Church omits the next three verses and goes on to the twelfth verse, with which the Epistle ends and which contains these words, comforting to all. *"I remember how Thou deliverest them that wait for Thee, O Lord, and savest them out of the hands of the nations."* We should bear in mind that this is a prayer offered to God by a devout Hebrew, who wept at being oppressed by the Gentiles; whether these were the kings of Egypt or of Syria matters little; this is why he speaks of the nations or of the Gentiles out of whose hands he prays to be delivered,

or rather thanks God for having already delivered him. Note well these words: *"Lord, Thou deliverest them that wait for Thee."* God's aid never fails to come at a seasonable time; but when is the seasonable time? It is not given to us to know this; He alone knows it who sees all, before whom our whole life is unfolded. The seasonable time for the liberation of Joseph was after many long years of trial and imprisonment; the seasonable time for Tobias was after many years of suffering and blindness; and so also with others. So then, my friends, let us never weary or waver during our days of trial. Is it for us to tell God the day or the hour when He shall hold out to us a helping hand? If we did so, we should be dictating to God, we should be putting ourselves in His place, and we should foolishly and impiously claim to know more than He. Our business is and ever will be to pray and hope and patiently wait until His hour comes, knowing to a certainty that His hour is ever the most seasonable one and the most serviceable to us.

Now if we go over in our mind what is said in this very beautiful passage from the prayer of Jesus of Sirach, read in the Mass, we shall find that it admirably portrays the life, struggles, sufferings, heroic deeds, and glorious martyrdom of the Virgin, whose feast we cele-

brate to-day. She, too, raising her eyes and hands, her mind and heart, to heaven, thanks God for having saved her from wicked tongues, for having rescued her from the hand of the executioner, for having preserved her body inviolate, for having delivered her from flames and eternal death, and for having brought her victorious out of the snares that were laid for her and out of the superstitions and brutalities of Paganism. And now, O pure and intrepid soul, enjoy the glory thou hast merited; entwine with the dazzling lily of thy purity the empurpled roses of thy martrydom; follow everywhere throughout the spaces of heaven the Lamb of God and sing forevermore the song that it is given only to virgins to sing.

HOMILY XII

Mass of a Virgin and Martyr

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish, and five wise. But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last come also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But

he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.—*Matt.* xxv. 1–13.

THIS parable of the *virgins,* like that of the *talents,* that immediately follows it, was spoken by Christ shortly before His death. By comparing the Gospels it is not difficult to ascertain that both were spoken by Jesus Christ on the Tuesday preceding His death either in the Temple, or, more probably, at Bethania, whither He had gone for the night. This being so He must have spoken it to His disciples, or to the small circle of hearers, who could succeed in gaining entrance into the hospitable home of Lazarus and of Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha.

The purpose of the parable of the ten virgins was to incite the disciples to watchfulness, so that they might not be taken unawares by the divine Judge when He should come, either at the end of time or at the moment of death. This purpose is manifest both from the character of the parable itself and from the very words of Jesus Christ, who in concluding says: *"Watch ye, therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour."* Let us explain it in detail.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the

bridegroom and the bride; and five of them were foolish and five wise."

The kingdom of heaven here means not heaven in the strict sense, but the Church in conflict here on earth, by means of which we may gain heaven. It will be sufficient to observe, without giving proofs of it, that within this kingdom the good and the bad are mingled together, and of these the wise and the foolish virgins are a figure; hence in the text heaven can not be meant, for in heaven there are only the good and the holy, but the Church in conflict here below, within which the good and the bad dwell side by side. The parable is taken from a custom the Hebrews had when celebrating marriages. It may not be amiss to say a word in explanation of this custom.

Marriages were celebrated in the evening at the home of the bride, and gathered there were a number of guests, many or few according to the rank of the bridegroom and bride. The bridegroom accompanied by a troop of friends and relatives conducted the bride, also accompanied by a number of female friends and relatives, to his own home.[1] It was customary for a band of young girls, not fewer than ten, carrying lamps, to await at the house of the bridegroom the coming of the newly married

[1] Hence the Latin expression: *Ducere uxorem*, to conduct or lead a wife. (A Lapide and Curci.)

couple, whom they went out to meet at their approach and joining the advancing cortége all entered together into the marriage feast. In the parable Our Lord represents the bridegroom and bride as coming from a distance, as being late in setting out from the home of the bride, and as arriving only about midnight; this He does to make the narrative more vivid and to bring out more strongly the necessity of being always watchful. It is useless to inquire why the waiting virgins or maidens are said to have been ten rather than twelve, or why they are divided into five foolish and five wise; this particular number is given and this division made because both are necessary for the scope of the parable, and no interpreter need seriously search to find a mysterious meaning in these facts.

It should be noted that Jesus Christ does not say that the *five virgins,* who failed to have oil, were *bad* or *wicked,* but only foolish, for, strictly speaking, they had done nothing positively wrong, they had been only negligent in discharging their duty; still this negligence, as we shall see, is enough to exclude us from heaven.

It would seem that the Hebrews did not, as did the Greeks and Romans, make use of torches, but of lamps, in escorting a newly married couple, and as these had to be fed with oil

the foolishness of the virgins who had not made provision, and the wisdom of those who had, are apparent. All had lamps and these were lighted, as the bridegroom and bride might arrive at any moment; but five of these young girls, thinking that the party would come early in the night, did not provide oil to refill their lamps in case of need; the other five, however, thinking that the young married couple might be late in coming, had provided oil, and in so doing showed their wisdom and foresight.

Who is the bridegroom that comes but does not fix the hour of his coming? Jesus Christ, the supreme Judge, who will come at the death of each of us, and again at the end of time to judge all, the just and the unjust. What is meant by "night" in the text? It means this present world, which as regards the life to come is a long night, during which each of us must have his lamp, the symbol of faith, trimmed and lighted. The bride is the Church in her glory; the prudent and foolish virgins and the men and women who accompany the bridegroom and bride are all believers. The marriage feast is a foreshadowing of heaven.

The ten virgins or maidens, as St. Hilary says, who are a figure of all men, have their lamps lighted, but they differ from each other in this, that the five wise provided themselves with oil, and the five foolish did not. And here

you will allow me to make a very important moral application of the parable.

A lighted lamp is a symbol of faith. As the light of a lamp dispels the darkness of night, shows the way to the wayfarer who carries it, and reveals to him the dangers to be avoided and the objects he might stumble over, so also faith, by holding up before our eyes the creed we must believe, and the commandments we must observe, points out to us the safe way that leads to heaven, the perils to be removed, and the foes to be met and subdued. Fancy a man in the midst of a vast plain, or in the heart of a thick forest at dead of night, without a ray of light from moon or stars and without a lantern or a guide, do you think he will ever be able to find the road he has lost? It is impossible. But give him a lamp, having the flame protected by glass to prevent its being extinguished by the wind, provide him with oil, and he will soon find his way and hastily pursue it. This is a figure of a man who without light crosses the moors and wilds of this earth, filled with pitfalls, ambushes, and precipices, and infested with savage beasts; if he has not a lamp to light his way he will go astray and perish miserably.

My friends, keep your lamps trimmed and burning; see that the strong wind of unbelief does not blow them out; for if it should, you

will be enveloped in dense darkness and there be lost.

And is it enough to have the lamp lighted, to hold it aloft, so that it may show the path, and to walk in its light? No; the lamp gives light as long as it is fed with oil, but this is little by little consumed, and then what happens? The flame slowly decreases, grows pale, at intervals emits little sputterings, and finally dies. If we would keep our lamps lighted we must have oil at hand to refill them. So also, my friends, is it with faith. Faith is lighted in us by holy Baptism, but if we would keep it ever burning, if we would have its flame go on increasing and lighting up our way, we must feed it, and the food of faith is the word of God, prayer, the sacraments, and good works generally. A Christian who never or rarely listens to the word of God, who never prays, or only seldom and then without putting his heart into his words, who rarely if ever frequents the sacraments, never does works of charity, never curbs his passions; in a word, a Christian who does not feed the flame of his lamp with the oil of good works, will soon see his faith languish and fade away in the midst of doubts, its light will be extinguished, its voice hushed and finally it will die within him.

My friends, may such a misfortune never come upon us; if it should we would grope our

way in the midst of darkness, our fall would be inevitable and our eternal loss certain. Let us, then, keep our lamps always lighted, let us have ever at hand the oil of good works by which they are fed.

"And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept." Was the fact that these young girls grew drowsy as the hours advanced and finally fell asleep a fault, or a sin? No; this was natural, a craving of nature, and no fault at all; the bridegroom had not come and when he should come they were prepared to do their duty, and hence the Gospel says that all slept, the wise as well as the foolish. The fault was in the five foolish virgins not providing the oil necessary to replenish their lamps.

Let us go on with the parable: *"At midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."* At midnight when all was silent and all slept profoundly, also the ten virgins, who had vainly struggled against the overmastering demands of nature, the clear, ringing voice of the messenger, who preceded by some little distance the advancing retinue, was heard crying out: "Here is the bridegroom, go ye forth to meet him." On hearing this cry all the young girls were startled, they roused themselves, got up quickly, hastily adjusted their gowns as best they could, and ran for their lamps, making

ready to descend the stairway and go out to meet the bridegroom and bride. But they had a painful surprise; their lamps were gone out, or nearly so, for want of oil. The wise virgins immediately seized their oil-flasks, refilled, trimmed, and cleansed their lamps, and at once the flame revived and burned brilliantly.

And what of the five foolish virgins? They looked at one another in dismay; they saw that their lamps were burning low, some of them entirely extinguished; they realized that they had been guilty of a great imprudence, and in their distress they knew not what to do. Should they go out to meet the bridegroom and bride with their lamps not lighted? No, certainly not; they would be reproved and punished if they did. Should they remain in the house? To do so would imply a grave discourtesy which would not go unpunished. Should they procure oil? How and where could they procure it at that hour and in so brief a space of time? In the meantime the voice of the forerunners was heard coming nearer and nearer and rising higher and higher, saying: "Here is the bridegroom, go ye forth to meet him," and the tramp and noise of the approaching retinue were clearly distinguishable. Fancy the anxiety, the excitement, and distress of those young girls, wholly at a loss to know what to do.

In this fact Jesus Christ wishes to make clear to us what will be the dread and bewilderment of those, who have been careless and reckless, who while possessing faith, have cared nothing for good works, when the final judgment comes, or when they realize that death is near and that in consequence their divine Judge is also near. In the Book of Wisdom the Holy Ghost has left us a most vivid description of their feelings. These miserable men will see themselves there at the tribunal of Christ, the Judge, and they will know that it is useless either to try to deceive Him or to hope for mercy; the sentence hanging over them is irrevocable. They will go back in thought over their past lives, that have vanished as a dream; they will discover in them none of the works that should embellish and enrich the life of a Christian; they had never prayed, or very seldom; they had not listened to the word of God; they had not received the sacraments, or they had received them without fervor and it may be sacrilegiously; they had not mortified themselves, nor fasted, nor abstained; they had not given alms nor had they been charitable to the poor; their entire lives had been one network of pleasures and vanities, of pride and intemperance, of unclean loves, of incontinence and immoral and obscene discourses, of rancor and hatred, of jealousy, envy,

revenge, and injustice; they had thought only of the world, they had served only the world; they had never thought either of their soul or of God. The lamp of their life is about to be extinguished forever, it is impossible to keep it lighted more than a few instants; the Supreme Judge is already at the threshold, already His voice is heard crying out: *"Give an account of thy stewardship."* Great God! Who can picture the anguish, the appalling dread, the agony of a poor soul that has no longer time to make provision for the future, to remedy the past, and to light again the lamp that has gone out! While we have still time let us rouse ourselves from our torpor and sleep of indifference, trim our lamps, provide oil, that is, do works that will merit everlasting life.

The poor unfortunate girls, almost distracted with fear and confusion, turning to the prudent virgins said: *"Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."* Here the rule of St. John Chrysostom is to be applied, in which he tells us that all parts of a parable are not always necessary to bring out the meaning that is intended; details are sometimes added to give beauty to the narrative or vividness to the description; and such doubtless is the scope of the request the foolish virgins made of the wise. At the moment of judgment, says St. Jerome,

the virtues of some can not be of advantage to others or make reparation for their sins.[1] The request of the foolish virgins only goes to show that they saw their mistake, wished if possible to correct it, and realized how circumspect their companions had been in making provision while yet they had time.

The answer of the wise virgins was prompt and such as might be expected: *"Perhaps there may not be enough for us and for you."* It was a polite refusal indeed, but it naturally implied a reproof, in that they had disdained to imitate those who had given them an example of foresight. The wise virgins added a bit of advice which it was impossible to follow: *"Go ye rather,"* they said, *"to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."* This phrase also, like that mentioned above, is not to be taken literally, but to be regarded as something added to complete the parable and to make it more lively and dramatic. Still, as St. Augustine says, when judgment comes there is no longer time for prayer or merit, the time for buying, or acquiring merit or doing penance, has gone by forever.[2]

The parable goes on: *"Whilst they went to*

[1] "Non possunt in die judicii aliorum virtutes, aliorum vitia sublevare." (Apud Á Lapide.)

[2] "Post judicium non patet precum aut meritorum locus. Excesserat emendi tempus, nec adveniente die judicii locus erit poenitentiae." (Apud Á Lapide.)

buy the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.'' Up to this point the parable has been an image of the Church militant, for, not to mention other arguments supplied by the text, the wise and foolish virgins can not possibly represent the Church in glory. From this point on the parable presents to us an image of the final separation of the good from the wicked, and hence of the end of the Church militant and of the entrance into the Church triumphant. The Bridegroom, or Jesus Christ, together with the retinue and the five wise virgins, enters into the hall, where the marriage feast is spread, a figure of heaven, and the door is closed, or an end put to this life of trial. The curtain is let fall upon the scene of this world; the elect are introduced into the banquet hall of the everlasting nuptials; and the lazy, the slothful, and wicked are forever shut out. And so the lot of each one, whatever it may be that he has prepared for himself by his works, is eternally fixed.

The parable adds a particular intended to bring out its scope more clearly and to show that the foolish virgins were condemned. These after a short time came knocking at the door and crying out to the bridegroom: *''Lord, Lord, open to us.''* This fact and these words make clear to us how wretched and des-

perate were those poor virgins, who also wished to partake of the banquet; and they portray to life the anguish and the agony of the reprobate, when separated from the just and shut out from heaven. The Bridegroom, namely Christ, answered: *"Amen, I say to you, I know you not."*

What, O Lord, dost Thou say? That Thou dost not know these unhappy souls? Didst Thou not create and preserve them? Didst Thou not call them into Thy Church? Didst Thou not enrich them with Thy gifts? Is there any person or thing whatever that Thou dost not know? How then canst Thou say: *"I do not know you?"* Yes, certainly the Lord knew them, and He knew them so well, them and their works, that He would not admit them into His heavenly kingdom. "I," Jesus Christ said in effect, "I do not know you as Mine; I condemn you, reject you; you have not served Me, but yourselves and your own ease; I have nothing to do with you." The words: *"I know you not,"* according to St. John Chrysostom, signify hell with all its unendurable torments; nay, if possible, they signify something more horrible still; they signify being hopelessly and everlastingly shut out from God's presence, which is of all torments the greatest.[1] When we wish to ex-

[1] "Cum dixerit: Nescio vos, nihil aliud quam gehenna et

press the disgust and contempt with which a person inspires us and to protest that we will have nothing more to do with him, we usually say: "Begone, I know you not." We can not offer him a more cruel offence. And that is what Christ will say to the reprobate after death, and what He will again repeat at the end of time: "Depart from Me, I know you not." Cast off by Christ! Disowned by Him! Shut out from His banquet! What anguish! What an agony! May God preserve each of us from so horrible a misfortune?

The lesson to be conveyed by the parable, which indeed seems clear enough and could hardly be more so, is contained in the last sentence, where it is stated by Our Lord in express terms in order that its importance may be fully appreciated: *"Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour."* We have seen that the bridegroom came at the dead of night, at an hour when he was not expected, for the maidens were asleep; he came and those who were prepared, who had faith and the works of faith, entered with him into the marriage feast; on the contrary, those who were indolent and slothful, who were found without works, were inexorably shut out from the house. We know

intolerabilis cruciatus relinquitur: imo vero etiam gehenna istud verbum gravius est." Apud A Lapide.)

not the day nor the hour of death and judgment; let us keep the oil of good works ready;[1] let us make our faith luminous in our works, and thus God will have the glory of them. St. Augustine says that he who is prepared until time for sleep, that is, until death, which none can escape, will also be prepared when at dead of night he shall hear the sound of that voice which will awaken us.[2]

[1] "Quia ignoratis diem judicii, lumen bonorum operum praeperate." (S. Hieron., apud A Lapide.)

[2] "Quisquis paratus est usque ad somnum, quae omnibus debetur, paratus invenietur etiam cum illa vox media nocte sonuerit, qua omnes evigilaturi sumus." (S. August., Serm. xxii, De Verbis Domini.)

HOMILY XIII

Mass of a Virgin and Martyr

Me Exspectaverunt, etc.

I omit the very short Epistle taken from Chapter LI of Ecclesiasticus, the words of which are already commented on in Homily XI. The thoughts, and almost the words, in each are the same. The reader then will pardon the omission of these few verses.

At that time Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; which when a man hath found he hideth: and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking good pearls; who, when he had found one precious pearl, went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go forth, and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of

fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea. He saith unto them, Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.—*Matt.* xiii. 44–52.

These parables were spoken by Jesus to the disciples and people during the first period of His preaching in Galilee, in the neighborhood of Capharnaum, as is clear from a comparison of the Gospels as well as from what precedes and follows this chapter in the text.

Here, as you will have noticed, three short parables are related; the first two, those of the hidden treasure and priceless pearl, may be treated as one, since they are intended to establish the same truth; the third, that of the net cast into the sea, has a somewhat different scope, and hence we shall explain it separately. The truths taught and the lessons inculcated are not elevated or novel, but common and elementary; still they are great truths and the lessons they convey are very important.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hidden in a field; which a man having found, hid it, and for the joy thereof goeth and selleth all he hath and buyeth the field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seek-

ing good pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all he had and bought it.'' Such are the first two parables. Every one will instantly see that the kingdom of heaven, of which Our Lord here speaks, is the preaching of the Gospel, or faith, or, if you prefer, Jesus Christ Himself, the author and consummator of both, the center of all truth and the fountain of all grace. This is also what is meant by the treasure in the first parable, and by the priceless pearl in the second. The treasure is said to have been found and again hidden by him who found it; the pearl is said only to have been found; both he who found the treasure and he who found the pearl did not hesitate a moment about selling all they had, the first to buy the field where the treasure was hidden, and the second to purchase the pearl. What does Jesus Christ teach by these parables? Evidently this and only this, that once one knows the truth of the Gospel, knows the faith, knows Jesus Christ, he must if needs be give up everything and sacrifice everything to possess Him. Before going on to show you how reasonable and necessary it is to do this, allow me to solve a difficulty, which on hearing this parable read doubtless came into your mind.

Here a man finds a treasure hidden in a field. What does he do? He keeps it hidden and,

after selling everything he has, without saying a word about the treasure, goes and buys the field to get possession of the treasure. Is this lawful? Did not the purchaser, by saying nothing of the treasure to the owner of the field, violate justice?

I think what he did was lawful and that there was not a shadow of injustice in so acting. He who finds a treasure in another's field and buys the field at a fair price, becomes thereby the owner of the treasure hidden in it. What law obliges him to make known to the owner that there is a treasure hidden in the field? No law. Only he knows of the treasure and he uses his knowledge for his own advantage, as every one would do and does.[1]

If any one fancies that the purchase of that field was not wholly in keeping with the principles of justice, I shall not discuss the matter with him. But I will remind you that Jesus Christ did not say a word as to the justice of this purchase, just as in another passage He did not approve of the conduct of the steward who robbed his master; as in the case of the steward He did not approve of the theft, but commended his foresight in providing for himself, so here He could propose for our imitation the foresight of the purchaser, without saying

[1] St. Thomas and other theologians hold that this purchase was perfectly lawful. I fail to see why Curci should doubt it.

ought of the justice of the purchase. Let us put aside this useless question and consider the exalted teaching of our divine Saviour in the two parables.

Is there or can there possibly be on this earth anything of greater value than the teachings and the faith of Jesus Christ? There can be no doubt about your answer. This faith contains all the eternal truths which Jesus Christ Himself taught us, and which He wished His apostles and His Church to teach ceaselessly until the end of time. These truths must be the guide of our reason and the rule of our conduct; they must lead us along the way of virtue and on to the possession of everlasting happiness, the possession of God Himself. These truths are rays of light issuing from God, the Sun of eternal truth; they dissipate the darkness that surrounds us and encompasses us on every side. Without the teachings of Jesus Christ, which come to us through the Church, without faith, what would become of us? What would be our condition? My God, what a frightful thought! We should not know whence we came or whither we are going; what we can do or ought to do to please God; our existence upon this earth would be an enigma; death and all that follows it would be an inexplicable mystery; our soul would be ever weighed down by agonizing doubt; we should

be uncertain about everything that most concerns us, about God, our origin, our duties, and our end, about virtue and vice and the life to come, in a word about everything.

If everything we know by faith should be taken out of this world what knowledge could we possibly have about the cardinal truths that mostly concern every man, about God, the origin of the world, man and the soul, the rule of morality, the life beyond the grave, and all that awaits us there? And I make no distinction here between men of talent and men of no talent, between the literate and the illiterate. Our knowledge would be very little, and that little uncertain, confused, and practically such that it would be useless and possibly increase our doubts and distress. Say for example that the sun should no longer rise above the horizon; little by little all vegetable and animal life, whether in the air, on the earth, in the bosom of the waters, or elsewhere, would wither away and become extinct, and man together with it. This is an image of what would happen in the intellectual and moral world should faith be taken from us, should the teaching of the Church, whether by word of mouth or by the written word, wholly cease. Nor should you forget that those who do not possess the teachings of the Church and of the faith of Christ, who reject them and possibly make war on

them, still in spite of themselves derive advantage from them; they are like those who utter blasphemies against the sun because they suffer from the heat of its fierce rays, and yet they can neither walk, nor labor without the aid of its beneficent light.

Now if and since the faith of Christ and the teaching of the Gospel are so greatly beneficial to all; since with this faith and these teachings the hope of everlasting happiness and of God Himself is inseparably bound up, reason itself will tell us that to gain possession of them, if we have them not, we ought to sacrifice everything, even life itself if necessary.

But fortunately we are not called upon to make the slightest sacrifice for the purchase of this treasure of faith, of this pearl of great price; thank God we all possess it; we received it before we even knew its inestimable worth. Still, if we need not sell our property or sacrifice honor and life to acquire it, we must make some sacrifices to retain and preserve it.

My friends, faith, like morals, is exposed to perils, and to more in this than in any former age. The reading of most of the books, magazines, and newspapers that flood our country is a peril to faith; so also is much of the conversation that goes on among worldly men at clubs and places of public resort; so again are many lectures and conferences, some of which

are designedly intended to undermine and sap the foundations of faith; some schools are a peril to faith, so also are certain friendships, certain theatrical representations, and the scandals among the upper and lower classes; still another peril is the indifference, the practical apostasy of certain Catholics, some of whom really are and some of whom affect to be men of learning; there are perils to faith everywhere, they are of all kinds, and as they were yesterday and are to-day so will they be to-morrow and for all the to-morrows until the end. If, then, the perils to which our faith is continuously exposed are great and beyond count, so ought our care to avoid and escape them be great, unremitting, and solicitous. But a constant and an extreme care in avoiding and fleeing from enemies that either openly or secretly assail our faith and plot against it is not enough; we must also make every effort to nourish and strengthen this faith, so that it may be strong enough to resist any assault, no matter whence or from whom it comes. When a contagious disease spreads over the country we do not content ourselves with fleeing from the external causes of the contagion; we take such food and drink and preventive medicines as will preserve the health of the body and increase its strength. When robbers are about in a district we not only see that

the doors are well locked, and the strong boxes in which we keep our money and jewels well guarded, but we also provide arms to defend ourselves in case of need. Faith, as we have said, is more to us than wealth; it is a jewel of great price, the life of our soul, and we ought to guard it with all care; we ought to protect it, nourish it, and strengthen it within us, so that it will not be possible for our enemies to rob us of it. But there is nothing that will contribute so much to nourish and strengthen faith as to study it, to become familiar with its excellences and its beauties, to profess it openly, to give ourselves to the practices of piety, and above all to make actual its sublime teachings in our lives and conduct. Ah, my friends, since God has deposited this treasure in our hearts, since He has adorned our foreheads with this priceless pearl, let us guard it jealously, let us take a holy pride in it, and let us joyously give up everything, all we possess, provided only we can preserve that alone.

And now let us go on to the second, or rather I should say, to the third parable. "*The kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea and gathering together all kinds of fish;* [1] *which*

[1] Curci translates thus: "*Gathering together all sorts of things,*" and I think he is right. The Greek text bears him out: Ευ παντος μενους. Moreover it is not easy to understand the distinction between *good* fish and *bad;* which are the good?

when it was filled they drew out, and sitting by the shore they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth." It is needless to say that the sea is a figure of the world, that the net represents the Church, and that the catch of good and bad fish represents the righteous and sinners, who live and will live mingled together in the Church until the final separation.

"See," says Christ, "what fishermen do. From the boat they let down the net into the sea, open it out, and at the proper time gently drag it toward the shore and on to dry land; then they proceed to take out everything they find in the net, fish that are good to eat and fish that are not; the former they put into vessels prepared for the purpose, the latter they throw back into the sea, or leave on the shore. So," says Jesus Christ, "*shall it be at the end of the world.*"

By whom will this solemn and final separation be made? Certainly by God, but by means of angels, who are the ordinary executors of His will: "*The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just.*" From whence shall the angels go? Assuredly from heaven, and they shall appear on earth.

The meaning of the text is that together with fish other things were taken in the net, such as shells, stones, seaweed, dirt, and the like; these latter were cast away and the fish put into vessels.

How will the separation be effected? Like the judgment, in an instant, and it will be effected, so to say, of itself; the righteous will appear encompassed by light and with bodies in glory; the wicked will appear in all the repulsiveness of their sins, in bulky, deformed, and loathsome bodies. The righteous will ascend up on high, the wicked will be precipitated into the prison below. Cast a bit of cork and piece of lead into water, the former rises to the surface, the latter sinks to the bottom. The same will happen to the bodies of the righteous and the wicked on the day of separation.

And whither will the wicked go? "*They,*" the angels, "*shall cast them into a furnace of fire.*" "*A furnace, hell, a place of torments,* an *abyss,* a *prison,*" etc., are Biblical expressions, meaning what we understand by *hell,* the abode of the damned. Here Christ specifically names one of the torments reserved for the wicked in that frightful prison, namely, a *furnace of fire.* My friends, we may not alter a syllable of Holy Writ or distort its sense; to do so would be to adulterate the word of God and to be guilty of a horrible sacrilege. Now if Holy Writ in speaking of hell mentions fire, not once or twice but always, a Catholic may not doubt of its existence; in hell among the other torments there must be that appalling torment of fire. What this fire is, or how it is

lighted, endures, and burns the damned without consuming them; how it burns not only bodies, but souls separated from bodies; what is its nature, and how it pains the guilty, more or less according to their sins, we do not know; it is enough for us to know that there is fire down there in that pit and that the power and wisdom of God can do what we cannot comprehend and what even seems to us impossible.

The Gospel records two effects produced by being shut up in that awful prison of hell, which show how atrocious are its pains: "*There* (in hell) *shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Weeping is indicative of great grief; gnashing of teeth is the effect of great horror and frightful agony. In these words, "fire, weeping, and gnashing of teeth," Jesus Christ gives us a living picture of the frightful tortures of hell.

Note in this phrase, that came forth from the mouth of Christ Himself, how few and concise are His words, and yet so clear is His meaning that it could not be more so. How could He express Himself more briefly and tersely than in these words: "*They shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*"? There is no minute, brilliant, and diffuse description of that place of anguish; no figures, no studied imagery; nothing hidden, nothing exaggerated; the language is the austere, decided, con-

fident language of truth; whether it is pleasing or not pleasing to sense, whether it shocks or does not shock reason, matters not; it is the truth; and the truth is that there is a hell and that in hell there is fire, and in the midst of these flames there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We priests ought to learn from Jesus Christ to preach the eternal truths as He preached them, fearlessly, simply, clearly, without exaggeration, and without attempting to soften down their severity and harshness, so as to make them acceptable. And next we should learn from Jesus Christ to bring these truths before the people, not at long intervals but often, and especially the fear-inspiring truths of the judgment that awaits us all, and of the hell that is prepared for those who sin wilfully and stubbornly refuse to repent; and this admonition is all the more necessary since there are those to whom it is difficult or repugnant to speak these truths out boldly. In the Gospel there are truths that are comforting and most gratifying, and there are others that are bitter and terrible; we preach, and ought to preach, both the one and the other, for both are necessary.

Having uttered these words, Jesus ceased speaking for a few moments, and, looking round upon His hearers, and particularly upon

the apostles, who were gathered about Him, as if interrogating them, He added: *"Have you understood all these things?"* That is, do you understand them sufficiently to be able, when the time comes, to teach them to others? The apostles at once answered with that simplicity and frankness so characteristic of them: "Yes, we have understood them." Then Jesus said: *"Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old."*

The word *scribe,* which means a teacher or a doctor of the Law, is used in the Gospel in a good sense and in a bad, but more frequently in a bad sense than in a good. Jesus Christ addressing His disciples, for He meant this for them, said in effect: "You assure Me that you have understood all the things I have spoken to you; well and good; keep them in memory and teach them to others, bearing in mind that every one of you ought to be a true scribe, a real teacher or doctor, not of the Law of Moses, but of Mine. Now what does a real, courageous Doctor of the Law do, one who thoroughly knows My doctrine, the doctrine that alone can bring men into the kingdom of heaven? He does as a good father of a family does. He keeps in his larder or cabinet everything necessary or useful, as time or circum-

stances may require, for his children and domestics, things old and things new according to their needs. So also do you; lay up a treasure of all things, of the old that you have learned from the Law of Moses and that have been approved by Me; of the new, that you have heard from My mouth, and at the proper time preach them and teach them to the people."[1] This admonition of Jesus Christ is also addressed to us His ministers. We ought to announce what, and only what, He has taught us; but not at haphazard, or confusedly and without discretion. We ought to teach you, my friends, what is most seasonable, what corresponds to your age and condition, to your education, capacity, and needs, as is done in providing food and furnishing clothing. A babe requires one sort of food, a young boy another, a young man another, a robust man another, and an old decrepit man still another; so also with clothing; it must be adapted to each person and to the ages of infancy and youth, adolescence and manhood.

We, my friends, will do our best to comply with the command of the divine Master, preaching all truth to you, bringing forth out of the treasure-house of the Gospel and of the Church

[1] Curci says that to refer *old things* to the teaching of the Old Testament and new things to the teaching of the New Testament, is a *forced and useless sense.* I do not think so. To me it seems the natural sense.

old things and new; and do you come to listen to them and turn them to account.[1]

[1] If I followed my general rule I should write for insertion here two Homilies, one on the Epistle and the other on the Gospel of the Mass *Dilexisti* of Virgins. The Epistle is quite short and sets forth the praise of virginity, but since the Apostle treats explicitly of this same subject in the Epistle of the Mass that follows, I omit it here. The Gospel is the same that I explained in Homily XII, and hence I shall go on to the Epistle of the Mass of Virgins, which begins: *Vultum tuum deprecabuntur.*

HOMILY XIV

Mass of Virgins

Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord, to be faithful. I think, therefore, that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for man so to be. Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she hath not sinned: nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh. But I spare you. This, therefore, I say, brethren; the time is short; it remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoiced, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you to be without solicitude. He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he

that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried women and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.—*1 Cor.* vii. 25–34.

THE Corinthians had proposed certain questions or points of doctrine and practice concerning which doubt had arisen. This is hardly to be wondered at, especially when we consider that in the beginning of the Church, wholly composed of converted Jews and Gentiles, who had been instructed only in the leading heads of doctrine by the apostles, there must necessarily have continually arisen many grave doubts and uncertainties. Among the difficulties that agitated the Corinthians and that St. Paul solves in his Letter was that of celibacy. It would appear that some of them, the forerunners of other heretics by whom the peace of the Church was soon disturbed, held that celibacy and virginity were matters of precept, a teaching that would have put an end to all society once it had become entirely Christian. And yet this doctrine, so contrary to human nature and the observance of which is so impossible, it would seem, found certain

defenders, and later on there were two sects, namely Encratites and Manicheans, that openly avowed and professed it. The question must certainly have been one of no small importance, when the Apostle thought it necessary to examine and solve it, which he does with a clearness that leaves nothing to be desired.

We have had a similar duty to perform with regard to heresies and heretics, who have been both the occasion and the cause why the Church has been obliged more accurately to set forth this revealed doctrine and more precisely to define its limits. As the gravity of a disease, its frequent alternations and obstinacy, call for the abilities and skill of a physician, and render deep and patient study necessary, so also the obstinacy, the sophistical and malignant subtlety of heretics, have forced the Church in her marvelous wisdom to define divine truth and to separate from it the teachings and opinions of men. Of this we have an indubitable proof in the doctrine regarding virginity, of which St. Paul speaks in the passage just read. It is important that you should properly understand this doctrine, for if in this age there are no longer those who wish to change the counsel regarding virginity into a divine precept, there are others who can not even tolerate it as a counsel and who would abolish it altogether, as contrary at once to the law of God

and man. It is a point of doctrine that demands and merits your best attention.

"*Now concerning virginity I have no command of the Lord.*" This is the beginning of the clear reply given to the question as to what rule was to be held with regard to virginity. Was it imposed by the Gospel? Was it left free to each? The answer is prompt and such that it solves the whole question. "*Concerning this,*" says the Apostle, "*I have no command of the Lord.*" In other words, he replied: "The Lord gives no command with regard to this, and how can I give one, who may do no more than repeat His words and His law?" The state of continency, or of virginity, as it is called, is not a divine law. This is the teaching of the Apostle and of Jesus Christ before him, who, when speaking on the subject to the apostles, said that all do not understand the excellence of virginity, that is, that all are not capable of it, but only those who are called.[1] And He adds, in confirmation of the same teaching, that there are some who, the more securely to gain the kingdom of heaven, of their own free will, live a life of virginity.[2] In the Gospel Jesus Christ and the apostles highly praised this state, and so also do the Fathers and Church, and they bring out into clearest light its wonderful advantages, but not a single

[1] Matt. xix. [2] Ibid. xix. 12.

passage can be quoted to show that it is imposed by God as a law.

But you will say: Does not the Church impose this state on her priests? Yes, certainly, but let us not get things confused. She says to those who aspire to the priestly dignity: If you wish to receive at my hands the honor of the priesthood, you must take upon you the obligation of living a life of perpetual continence; only on this condition will I raise you to such a dignity. Hence continency is a law that those who aspire to the sacred ministry voluntarily take upon themselves. Does the Church impose upon any one the study of theology and of the sacred sciences? It is a condition she lays upon those who wish to be ordained to the priesthood; and the same is true of priestly celibacy. Do not you at times, when you wish to engage a man-servant, require that he shall be unmarried, and if he is not you refuse to accept him? Do you in making this condition impose upon the man the rule of celibacy? Certainly not; it is simply a condition that you make, and that you have a right to make; and if the Church does in like manner, who can find fault with her?

Let us go back to the text: "*I have no command of the Lord,*" says the Apostle, to impose celibacy, "*but still I give counsel.*" See, my friends, how precise is the language of the

Apostle and how he distinguishes between a law and a counsel; "there is no divine law obliging to celibacy, but if you wish advice in the matter I am ready to give it; and I give it to you not of myself, who am the least of the apostles, but inasmuch as the Lord in His mercy has allowed me to be His faithful minister and to announce His truth to you: *As having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.*" This is the language of humility.

Here is the counsel which the great apostle gives us all: "*I think that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for man so to be;* that is to say that it is good for a man to remain as he now is and in the state in which providence has placed him." Here is repeated what he said in the preceding verses and in which he shows his tact. He tells all to be constant in the state to which each has been called. Is one a slave? Let him not worry about it; still if he can gain his freedom it is better to do so: "*Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called. Wast thou called being a bondman? Care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.*" In going on to explain his thought more fully, St. Paul writes: "*Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.*" Note well that St. Paul does not give a precept, but

only states his own point of view: *"I think."* And why counsel every one to remain as he is? He tells us in these words: *"For the present necessity."* These words need explanation. There have been some inconsiderate and heretical writers who thought that St. Paul was persuaded that the end of the world was nigh, and that in consequence he advised and urged the faithful to remain as they were, since there would soon be an end of all things. Had this been true St. Paul would have erred seriously with regard to a point so important; and even to entertain such a thought would be impious. What he did actually hold with regard to the end of the world is clear from his Letter to the Thessalonians, in which he bids them not to be troubled as if that were even imminent, and he gives them the signs that will precede the end of all things.

What, then, does St. Paul mean by the slightly obscure phrase: *For the present necessity?* The faithful to whom he was writing were mostly of Hebrew origin; he foresaw that the destruction of Jerusalem and the frightful slaughter of its inhabitants were not far off; he foresaw also the terrible persecutions of Nero, in which he himself and so many other Christians would be involved and be put to death; and seeing this appalling storm ready

to burst upon them, what was more natural than to write to them, saying: "This is no time to change your state or condition; he who has a wife, let him live with her; he who has not a wife, let him not involve himself in greater difficulties by taking one; let him continue to be free until the approaching hurricane has spent its fury."

These words may, and possibly should, be taken in a wider sense, as applicable to every one, meaning: Death is near to all of us; who can escape it? No one; it is a fatal necessity. Where, then, is the sense of borrowing trouble, entangling yourself in the cares of a family and in the whirl of worldly affairs? Follow my advice; remain as you are.

St. Paul was very solicitous lest the faithful, to whom he was writing, should mistake a counsel for a precept, and therefore he makes his thought still more clear, if indeed that was necessary, saying: "*But if thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned.*" St. Paul says to them: "You are free; you may or you may not enter the married state, as seems best to each of you, since there is no sin either in entering it or in not entering it." This of course is to be understood as a general rule, for there may be particular cases and special personal conditions in which one may be, and often is in duty

bound to enter the married state or to abstain from doing so, as every one will readily understand, and there is no need of determining which these special cases are.

"If you will get married," St. Paul says, "by all means do so, but I give you a warning that you ought not forget: *Those who choose the married state shall have tribulation of the flesh.*" [1] Every state has its share of good and evil, of advantages and disadvantages, and so also the married state. The love of husband and wife for each other and the support each is to the other; children, who make glad the domestic hearth and assure the future of the family, who by their obedience and affection and by their loving solicitude make home-life so pleasant and joyous, are blessings and advantages that all value and appreciate. But side by side with these blessings and advantages, great and precious as they are, what pain and anguish, what cares and sorrows? Diversity of character, mistrust, jealousies, personal defects inseparable from our nature, made still more galling and trying by the intimate relations of married life; the many cares of raising a family of children, cares, too, that are frequently thanklessly requited; the expense and annoyance of their education and

[1] *Tribulation of the flesh* is a Hebrew idiom and means all bodily pains and pangs.

training, the worry and anxiety concerning their life and their health, which is often feeble, and their moral conduct, which is often licentious; these and many other causes of distress and uneasiness give no end of pain and grief to parents! How many tears do they shed, often unknown to the world, and therefore the more bitter! Ye fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, who listen to me, tell me if I exaggerate. Tell me yourselves if your state, apart from few and brief seasons of pleasure, sweet if you will, does not entail what St. Paul in energetic phrase calls the tribulation of the flesh?

Does St. Paul, in saying all this, wish to dissuade men from a state enjoined by nature and the Author of nature, a state that is the most common and the most necessary? Certainly not; he only wishes to warn the faithful before entering upon it to measure their strength and to prepare themselves by a schooling in all Christian virtues to bear the burdens of that state. In considering those accumulated pains and trials that make the married state so burdensome, he adds in an accent of profound pity: *"But I spare you."*

Taking up again the thread of his argument, the great Doctor goes on: *"This, therefore, I say, brethern, the time is short."* Whether you embrace this state or that, marry or remain unmarried, matters little, for the time we

have to live here below is short. Not indeed that the last day, the end of time, is near, but that the last day for each of us, the day of death, is not far off, is even at the threshold. And if some years of life should be given to us, what would they avail? They would be but as a dream, as a flash that appears and is not. Why, then, should the things of earth give us so much thought and perplexity? The life of a Christian on this earth should be inspired and governed by this great underlying truth: The goods of the present life are as nothing, the life to come is everything.

Still bringing out this truth, so obvious and yet of supreme importance, he says: *"It remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as if they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not."* This language seems strange, and yet it is the language of supernatural wisdom. A certain time, long or short, as the case may be, is granted to each of us; whether we are bound by the ties of marriage or loosed from them; whether we are sad or joyous, rich or poor; whether we use well or ill the goods of this earth matters little. They are all fleeting. Why, then, should we fix our heart on them? We are immortal, and should

we tie our affections to things mortal? We are destined for heaven, and should we bind ourselves to earth? We are created for God, and should we love only His creatures, think only of them? Does a traveler so love his lodging-house as to forget his home? Where is the man who is as attached to the clothes he wears, to the instruments he employs, to the furniture he uses, as if they were part of his body? The goods of this earth, riches, honors, pleasures, and the like, are things that are outside us; they do not constitute part of our being, of our soul or even of our body, and we must soon give them up, abandon them as we do a lodging-house, worn-out clothes, and whatever else serves only for our use. We do not own these things, we have only the use of them, and this only for the very short space of time that is measured by this life. Let us use them only in so far as they are necessary to us; pleasure and suffering, rejoicing and weeping, riches and poverty, should all be to us things to which we are indifferent: *"For the fashion of this world passeth away."*

Everything that worldlings mostly desire and love is included in the word *world,* and this world is properly called by St. Paul a *fashion,* a *shadow* or *appearance,* that seems abiding, but is not; it is fleeting and passes swiftly away.

What is the life of man upon this earth?

asks St. Augustine. "It is a torrent; as a torrent formed and swollen by rains, overflows, roars, and rushes on, and in rushing on passes away, so also is it with the current of this mortal life. Men are born and live and die; and as they die others are born to replace them. What is there that is stable? What is there that abides? What is there that does not like a torrent rush on to the sea and hurl itself into the abyss?"[1] Since, then, everything on this earth passes rapidly away, only a fool will link his fortunes to it; live the life of the body on earth, but the life of the spirit in heaven; this is the sum total of Christian wisdom.

Let us follow our master: *"I would have you to be without solicitude."* Who does not feel in these words of the Apostle the warmth of a father's tender care? He seems to say that the one thing he has most at heart is that they shall not be worried, that they shall be free from all distracting care and anxiety, that thus, having their thoughts and affections disengaged, they may the more easily give their hearts to God. But to be thus free they must be loosed from the cares that are necessarily

1 "Sicut torrens pluvialibus aquis colligitur, redundat, perstrepit, currit, et currendo decurrit, idest cursum finit sic est omnis iste cursus mortalitatis. Nascuntur homines, vivunt, moriuntur, et aliis morientibus alii nascuntur. Quid hic tenetur? Quid hic non decurrit? Quid non quasi de pluvia collectum it in mare, in abyssum?" (In Ps. cix, apud A Lapide.)

associated with the married state. For "*he that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord; how he may please God.*"

True, there are many persons free from the cares that naturally belong to the married state, who never give a thought to God, nay more, some of them purposely avoid this state that they may be freer to indulge to the full in the pleasures of the world, and unfortunately the number of these is quite large in cities and among the wealthy and the better educated. Of those who seek to be free that they may lead bad lives, of those who seek to escape the salutary restraints of marriage and of a family, in order to indulge their sensual appetites and become slaves of the most shameful passions, we do not speak. In the verse quoted St. Paul simply means to say that the celibate state offers either to man or woman, who wishes to embrace it, a greater facility to serve God and to think of his or her soul. Our mind and heart are as two vessels of limited capacity; we can fill them with thoughts and affections of heaven or of earth, as we will; if the former are many the latter will be few; if the latter surpass the former in number and intensity, man will be of the earth earthy. Now the married state with its ties and cares increases—greatly increases —the number of earthly worries and attach-

ments; it must, then, lessen the number of heavenly thoughts and affections and make it more difficult for us to serve and please God. This is what St. Paul says: *"But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world how he may please his wife, and he is divided."* A married man must be with his wife; he must provide for her what is necessary; he must also gratify her in things that are not necessary, that the position of the family and the usages of society seem to require; he must buy her fashionable and it may be luxurious garments; he must allow her to give receptions, to go to entertainments and theaters, and so on. Then there are the children; as they grow up so do the cares, the expenses, and the infinite attentions they require increase. So you see, my friends, the husband and the father, who will not prove faithless to the duties of his state, must of necessity live in the midst of the world, must be busied with a thousand things that will occupy his time and prevent him from thinking of God, from attending to his prayers, from studying to gain self-knowledge, and from giving himself freely to the work of his own sanctification. He is a man who, according to the phrase of St. Paul, is divided: *"And he is divided."* He is divided between the world and God, between thoughts and sentiments of earth and thoughts

and sentiments of heaven; the strength, the energy which he must give to the interests of his family are withdrawn from the things of God and of the soul: *"He is divided."*

On the contrary, St. Paul goes on to say, *the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.* The Apostle contrasts the woman, and by consequence the man,[1] who live a virtuous celibate life, with the man and the woman who being married have taken upon them the burdensome and trying cares of the world. This woman, being free with the freedom of the children of God, easily fixes her thoughts upon Him, meditates upon His eternal truths, pours out to Him all the love of her heart, for her heart is not divided by husband and children; it is wholly His.

As an interpreter says, her body is sanctified by chastity and her spirit by familiar intercourse with God and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.[2] "Virginity," says Tertullian, "is the flower of morals, the honor of the body, the

[1] In the preceding verse St. Paul speaks of a man entangled in the cares of a married life; in this verse he speaks of a woman who is free from these cares. It is clear that what he says of a married man, he intends to say also of a married woman, and vice versa. He writes as he does for the sake of brevity.

[2] "Virgo sancta corpore est propter castitatem; spiritu autem sancta est propter familiaritatem cum Deo et Spiritus sancti inhabitationem." (Ecumenius, apud A Lapide.)

ornament of sex;"[1] it is the complete sovereignty of spirit over matter, a perennial sacrifice of the body to God, a holy wedlock of the soul with Jesus Christ; it is the renewal on earth of the life of Adam in his innocence, the most beautiful image of God Himself, the life of the angels. Can any state be more holy than this or more exalted?

This is why the Church has had, has now, and will ever have a most jealous care of celibacy; this is why she imposes it as an absolute condition upon all who wish to go up to her altars and offer the divine Victim, the King of virgins; this is why she regards with a most loving eye those blessed abodes in which virginity seeks a shelter and a home; this is why she pursues with the most constant and solicitous care that army of virgins, who are scattered through hospitals, orphanages, refuges, schools, and homes of suffering and sorrow, and who there diffuse about them the fragrance of angels. Celibacy is the strength, the life of the Church, the aroma of virtue, the nutriment of charity, the glory and might of the Catholic priesthood.

When I speak in this way of celibacy I mean the celibacy that is counseled by Jesus Christ and lauded by the Fathers and by the Church; the celibacy that cuts us off from the world and

[1] Lib. de Pudicitia.

its pleasures and leads us on to God; that frees us from the cares of the world in order to give us time and opportunity for prayer and study, for the works of the ministry and the exercise of charity; I mean that celibacy which, instead of a natural family, gives us an adopted family of the poor and suffering, of those needing instruction and comfort, among whom we may diffuse a love ennobled and inspired by the charity of Jesus Christ; in short, I mean to speak of the holy and virtuous celibacy that is born and nurtured in self-denial and makes itself all to all for the love of God; but by no means of that slothful, selfish celibacy, that is born of ambition and avarice, and is the fruitful parent of scandal and profligacy.

It not unfrequently happens in Catholic families that sons and daughters, called secretly by the voice of God within, long to live a religious life, and in consequence a life of celibacy, which is an essential part of the religious life. It should not seem possible, were it not attested by experience, that these generous souls find the greatest opposition where opposition is least becoming. Parents very frequently sternly oppose the right of children to follow a manner of life to which they feel themselves called. You parents have not only the right, but the duty, to know and be satisfied that your children have a religious vocation; this is

a duty that your years and experience, your authority, the interest you necessarily feel in their welfare, and above all the love you bear them, impose upon you; but once you have satisfied yourselves that they really have a vocation, you ought never in any way whatever oppose their carrying it into effect. Liberty in the choice of a state of life is inviolable and sacred; you ought scrupulously to respect this liberty; by opposing the vocation of your children you are opposing the will of God, you are unjustly giving them pain, you run a risk of making them unhappy and of blighting their lives, and you are taking upon you the guilt of a grave sin. If a son wishes to enter any of the liberal professions, you not only consent to his doing so, but you furnish him all the necessary aids; if a daughter wishes to get married you are delighted and gladly give your consent; but if they desire to consecrate themselves to God, to enter a convent, to give themselves to the care of the sick in a hospital, you cry out, threaten, and make a great ado. Liberty of conscience and the voice of God are not so respected! The happiness of your children is not so procured! You make no difficulty in giving them to the world, but you put all sorts of difficulties in the way when there is question of giving them to God, who has given them to you and who has all right over them.

Heaven forbid, O parents, that you will ever stand in the way of your children when they are called to serve God in religion; if God asks them of you, give them to Him; He does you a great honor in calling them to Himself; in days of sorrow you will find them a comfort and a source of incomparable joy; and when you are on your dying-bed, their prayers and their presence, it may be, will soften your pain and console you in your agony.

And you young men and maidens, whom God by ways known only to Himself calls to the honor and glory of celibacy, do not resist the call or put aught in the way; heed the voice of heaven; follow it courageously; it will facilitate and make more secure your eternal salvation.

We are like travelers about to set sail to cross the ocean, to go from the shores of earth and time to the shores of heaven and eternity; there are only two vessels on which to take shipping; one is light, graceful, and safe, the other heavy, cumbersome, and worn. Aboard which of these will you go, my friends? I think you will select the first. Both can make the trip across the ocean, you will say, but I shall go aboard the first because it is safe. And you are right. So far well. Now the religious life, the practice of celibacy, is the first boat, and the common life, the married state,

is the second boat; you are free to go aboard either; but if God calls you to the first, will you refuse, and prefer the second? To do so would be imprudent—and worse.

HOMILY XV

Mass of Widows

I omit here the Gospel of this Mass, because it is the same as in the Mass *Me exspectaverunt* of Virgins, already explained. I also omit the Epistle and Gospel of the Mass *Me exspectaverunt* of a Martyr, not a Virgin, because both have been explained and I go on to the Mass *Cognovi* of Widows.

WHO shall find a valiant woman? From afar, and the utmost bounds is her price. The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands. She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar. And she hath risen in the night, and given meat to her household, and food to her maidens. She hath considered a field, and bought it: with the fruit of her hands she hath planted a vineyard. She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm. She hath tasted, and seen that her traffic is good; her lamp shall not be put out in the night. She hath put out her hand to strong things,

and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle. She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hand to the poor. She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow; for all her household are clothed with double garments. She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry; fine linen and purple is her covering. Honorable in the gates is her husband, when he sitteth among the senators of the land. She made fine linen and sold it, and delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite. Strength and beauty are her clothing: and she shall laugh in the latter day. She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue: she hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children have risen up, and called her blessed; her husband, and he hath praised her. Many daughters have gathered riches: thou hast surpassed them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her works praise her in the gates.—*Prov.* xxxi. 10–31.

THE authorship of the three Books, the *Canticle of Canticles, Ecclesiastes* and *Proverbs,* is by common consent ascribed to Solomon. The thirty-one chapters of Proverbs are divided into two parts; in the first part the au-

thor discourses of divine wisdom, of the great blessings it brings, and of the evils from which it frees us;[1] in the second, he comes down to particular admonitions and gives beautiful rules of moral conduct for every class of persons, for young and old, masters and servants, husbands and wives, fathers and children, judges and magistrates, and even for kings; in a word all men may find in this Book wonderful lessons in practical wisdom, such as it will be difficult to find in other books.

The lengthy passage you have just heard read is taken from the last chapter, and, as is most likely, contains the wonderful admonitions that Solomon heard from his mother's lips; it closes with a eulogy on a valiant woman.

To-day the Church recalls to our minds the virtues of a holy widow, and it might be difficult to find in all Scripture a succession of sentences that better fit a life like hers or better portray its beauties. Although these sentences are made to apply especially to a widow, you should not fancy that they are not applicable to those who are not widows. I can assure

[1] The first part begins at the first chapter and ends at the ninth; the second goes from the ninth to the end. Some interpreters say, and with justice, that in the last two chapters there is a difference in matter, form, and structure such as to lead to the belief that they are the work of another writer. Still most interpreters think and hold, in spite of this dissimilarity, that Solomon is the author of them.

you at starting that every woman, no matter in what condition or rank of life she may be, can derive profit from them. The explanation will be rather lengthy, but as a compensation it will be both practical and interesting.

Solomon, after narrating the admonitions of his mother, goes on to speak the praises of a *valiant,* or as some translate it, of a well-bred woman, saying: *"Who shall find a valiant woman?"* As man is by nature the superior of woman in intelligence, energy of will, and physical strength, so is woman the superior of man in delicacy of feeling, tender affection, and physical beauty; hence it is an unusual thing to find a woman the equal of man in intellectual and moral power. This is why Solomon asks: *"Who shall find a valiant woman?"* Now of what kind of strength does he speak here? Certainly not of physical strength or strength of body, which of itself is of no great value, but of moral strength, of the strength that forms virtuous and heroic souls, this strength being in striking contrast with the feeble and timid nature of women. Solomon gives this answer to his own question: *"From the uttermost coasts is the price of her."* The worth of things depends upon the benefits derived from them, upon their beauty, still more upon their rarity, and often upon the remoteness of the place whence they come. A thing that has

little intrinsic value acquires great value if it has been brought from a distant country. Hence the Sacred Text says that a valiant woman acquires great value and merit by the exercise of virtue, because this is a rare and difficult matter, and is like those exquisite gems that are brought from distant lands.

Although by nature woman is weak, far weaker than man, nevertheless she may become, and in matter of fact does become, by art, discipline, and especially by grace, very strong, so that she not only rivals, but surpasses man. History, both profane and sacred, notably the latter, furnishes splendid proofs of this. It will be sufficient to recall the mother of the Machabees, the martyrs Agnes, Cecilia, Agatha, and thousands of others; or the mother of the young martyr Melithon, one of the forty martyrs condemned to die of cold in the depth of winter, stretched naked upon a frozen pool. All his companions had died; Melithon alone still lived. The executioners collected the bodies of the other thirty-nine, put them on carts and took them to the pile into which they were to be cast, leaving behind only that of the dying Melithon, in the hope that his constancy might be shaken and overcome. The brave mother, who was present, took him in her arms, followed the carts, and when he expired, laid him on the pile with the others, that even his

ashes might not be separated from that of his brother martyrs. Can strength of mind greater than this be conceived?

"*The heart of her husband trusteth in her* (the valiant woman) *and he shall have no need of spoils.*" The strong woman, proof against every trial, resolute as a man, will keep her heart whole for her husband, will be ever loyal, and always engaged in household work and in ruling her family; her husband may safely trust her, a shadow of jealousy or fear need never cross his mind, nor will it be necessary for him in order to provide for his family to take up arms and seek spoils in an enemy's country; the wife by her industry will abundantly provide for all his wants.[1]

Ye wives who listen to me, are you imitators of this strong woman, who, faithful to all her duties, deserves to be fully trusted by her husband and who sees to it that nothing is wanting to make her home a happy one? If so your husbands are fortunate! Your homes are the abodes of peace and joy! A husband may

[1] This phrase: *He shall have no need of spoils,* is by some, among them St. Augustine, referred to the woman, who by her industry and prudence will see that the family is amply provided for and will need nothing. But it seems more natural to make it refer to the man. When we advert to the usages of that age, in which the invasion and plundering of an enemy's country were commonly admitted to be an established right of war, the meaning of this phrase, which to us implies what is barbarous, will be readily understood.

sometimes be churlish to such a wife; he may deal harshly with her, abuse his authority over her and take advantage of her weakness; but she should not return evil for evil, offence for offence; rather she should be gentle with him and meek, forget offences received, and by her patience she will conquer his rudeness, as did Monica the mother of St. Augustine, who by her gentleness overcame her husband Patrick and changed him from a Pagan of harsh manners into a virtuous Christian. This is the meaning of the words of the text that follow: *"She will render him good and not evil."* And for how long? *"All the days of her life."* True virtue, the virtue of a strong woman, is not restricted by time; it extends through her whole life.

Here Solomon, in celebrating the praises of this woman, adverts to a matter, which may seem common and ignoble, but which, viewed in the light of reason and faith, is worthy of all commendation: *"She hath sought wool and flax and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands."*

The strong woman, spoken of here, is not a woman of the lower class, obliged to live by the labor of her hands; she is a lady of noble birth, or royal blood, very rich, and living among the splendors of a court; and yet she does not disdain to engage in manual labor, a labor most

common indeed, and yet most useful and necessary, namely, that of spinning and weaving wool and flax.

The bird, says Job, is born to fly, the horse to run, and man to labor. It is a sovereign and inexorable law imposed upon man by nature, and therefore by God, the Author of nature. It is a condition of life; life is inseparable from labor; labor is expressly commanded by God; if we will live, we must labor; he who will not labor, let him not eat. Are the rich and powerful, kings and emperors exempt from this law? By no means; no one is absolved from it; and the more exalted one is either by endowments of mind or by office, the more ought he to labor, since as the Gospel says, having received more, more will be required of him.

But some will say: "We are not obliged to labor; we can live and clothe ourselves without working." If you are not obliged to labor for yourselves, you are for your neighbor. Idleness is a crime, and no one may incur its guilt. And are you not ashamed to live of the sweat of another's brow? To eat bread you have not earned, to clothe yourself with garments for which you have not toiled? Do you not blush to be a consumer and not a producer, to be a burden and not an aid to the society in which you live? Jesus Christ, the

Man-God, the absolute owner of all things, toiled like a common laborer; Mary, His mother, the Queen of Angels and of men, worked at manual labor like the humblest among the daughters of Israel.

Ye women, who listen to me, even though you be rich, the daughters of lords and princes, still love to work with your hands. The sisters of Alexander the Great made his clothes; Augustus boasted that he wore only garments made by his wife, his sisters, and his nieces; the sisters of Charles the Great sat in the royal palace spinning and sewing. While you sit in your parlors during the long hours of the day, employ your time in making clothes for the children of the poor, the widows, and the sick; in mending the ragged and torn frocks of the orphan, the destitute, and forsaken, and in laboring to beautify the house of God; you will thus be doing a holy work pleasing to God and men, and your example will be a salutary school for the people. Work is not only a duty imposed by nature and religion upon all indiscriminately, according to the state and aptitudes of each, it is also an excellent school of morality, because it banishes idleness, which is the root of vice and which is so common among the wealthy; because by tiring the body it is in a way allied to mortification; because it lessens culpable poverty, which is the counselor

of evil; because it makes the mind more observant and teaches us to sympathize with those who suffer and toil in field and factory. St. Jerome, writing to a young mother, gives her this excellent advice: "Let your daughter learn to card wool, to hold the distaff, to keep the work-basket in her lap, to work with the spindle, to arrange and keep the fibers in order with her thumb." [1]

The Sacred Text compares this industrious woman to a merchant vessel bringing food from distant countries: *"She is like a merchant's ship; she bringeth bread from afar."* A ship that crosses the sea and carries in its hold the riches of Europe to America and Asia and carries back the riches of America and Asia to Europe, thus making common all the commodities of life, is like this woman, this mother of a family, who by her foresight and the labor of her hands provides for all the needs of her household and has always an abundance.

This is a wonderful woman and Solomon continues her praises: *"She hath risen in the night."* She gives needed rest to the body, but none to sloth. When she wakes and feels she has slept enough, although all is silent and the stars shine out in the heavens and darkness

[1] "Discat et lanam facere, tenere colum, ponere in gremio calothum, rotare fusum, stamina pollice ducere." (Ad Laetam, apud A Lapide.)

covers the earth, she lights her lamp, rises, hastily dresses herself, prepares the meal for her family and distributes provisions to her domestics: *"She hath given meat to her household and victuals to her maidens."* It is beautiful to see this woman, both the daughter and the wife of a king, rising before daylight, doing everything herself, arranging the work of the day and distributing all things necessary to her numerous family. Where will we find to-day, my friends, I will not say queens or great ladies, but women in easy circumstances, or even the daughters of ordinary people, who rise before the sun is up and begin the work of the household, being thus beforehand with the servants and assigning to them the work of the day? They have passed the greater part of the night at evening parties and receptions, engaged in useless and frivolous conversation, and the sun is well up in the heavens when they awake, and rising they turn the house upside down calling for their maids to do services that they might and ought to do themselves. No; such are not the women and mothers who will bring order and peace into households, augment their wealth, give to the Church well-behaved and religious sons and daughters, and to the country robust, industrious, and moral citizens, and if need be soldiers inured to fatigue and ready for great

sacrifices. It is a universal complaint that the present generation, especially of the cities and of the well-to-do classes, is sickly, feeble, addicted to idleness, eager only for pleasure, and afraid of any sort of sacrifice. What is one of the chief causes of this? Without doubt the training of home, which is effeminate and luxurious, and where children enjoy every comfort and delicacy whether of food or clothing, and are allowed to do as they like. And who is to blame for an education such as this, so lacking in sturdy, virile strength? I do not hesitate an instant to say frankly that you mothers are to blame; by word and example you habituate your children to live luxuriously, to indulge in all sensuous gratifications, to turn night into day and day into night, to stupefy both body and mind by sloth; and you teach them by your own conduct that it is the right and the privilege of the rich to do nothing and to enjoy themselves. Keep before your eyes this mother of a family, this queen, portrayed by Solomon, who rose from her bed while yet it was night to look after her household and to assign to men-servants and maid-servants the tasks of the day.

Let us follow Solomon in his vivid description of the pattern woman: *"She hath considered a field and bought it; with the fruit of her hands she hath planted a vineyard."* Cer-

tainly the purchasing and tilling of land are things more suitable to men than women; but there may be conditions when the woman must discharge the duties of a man, either because she is a widow, or because for some reason the husband is not able to work, and then it is laudable in her to look after the cultivation of the fields, and as a matter of fact the inspired writer in this passage praises her for so doing. As there have been women who have wielded the scepter and governed peoples with consummate wisdom, and who because of their virtues have been raised to the honor of the Altar, why should there not be others who are competent to look after the material interests of the family?

"She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm." Men when about to set out on a journey or to begin to work, in order to be more vigorous and agile, gird their loins about with a belt; so also women, who wish to be manlike and to grow sturdy by labor and exercise do the same. *"She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is good."* This woman not only gives herself to the care and cultivation of the field and to the planting and dressing of vines; she also engages in business, is successful in it, likes it, and finds it profitable. To the labors of the field, the first and most necessary of all avo-

cations, she adds that of trade and commerce, which can not be separated from each other. From these words we learn that it is not unseemly for a woman to engage in these pursuits, when it is either necessary or useful to do so.

To some it may seem singular that the Holy Ghost should by the mouth of Solomon praise this woman, who thus far has done nothing more than toil with her hands, look after the management of her household, till her fields, and engage in trade, all of which are common and ordinary occupations, in which there is nothing to denote extraordinary virtue. This objector seems not to know that the truest and the highest virtue consists in discharging well the duties of one's state; that the Blessed Virgin and Jesus Christ Himself, the Saint of saints, worked their entire lives at manual labor; that these material works, when done in a spirit of faith and from love of God, sanctify souls quite as much as do prayer and other exercises of piety and religion. You mothers of families, then, may console yourselves if you are obliged to give nearly the entire day to manual labor and to the care of your households; you can sanctify yourselves quite as well in leading this manner of life as those who, called by God, forsake the world and spend long hours at the foot of the Altar, meditating

upon the eternal truths and reciting prayers and psalms. See to it, however, that all your occupations are inspired by a spirit of faith, which will render them precious in God's sight and meritorious of everlasting life.

The woman, who does all this, will have part of her reward here on this earth.[1] *"Her lamp shall not be out in the night."* Many interpreters think this passage refers to the strong woman's assiduity and love of labor, since she stays up at night and continues by the light of a lamp the tasks of the day, and the interpretation is certainly a good one. Still since the same thought is touched upon above, where it is said, *"She hath risen in the night,"* it seems to me better to adopt another explanation. Among the Hebrews the phrase: *"The lamp shall not be put out in her house,"* means: *In her house shall be found prosperity, peace, and every blessing.* Assuredly the home of a family, such as is portrayed in this place by Solomon, will be the abode of peace, prosperity, and of all felicity possible on this earth.

"She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." What is surprising in a strong woman putting

1 I have said this often, but it is well to repeat a truth so useful and so frequently forgotten. Under the Old Covenant the virtuous man was promised an earthly reward; under the New Covenant this is changed, since we, who live under the Gospel, must live a life of faith.

out her hands, that is, in doing great works? What are these works? Those which the text indicates in a general way. If they do not seem works of any great importance, they are such for a woman, and when regarded in the light of reason and faith. Among those womanly works that are said to be *strong* or *great* is that of handling the spindle, which would seem to be a very humble occupation; still it is a very useful and necessary one, and one, too, proper to a woman and as such worthy of praise. Moreover, I think that in the words: "*Her fingers have taken hold of the spindle,*" the inspired writer intends to include all the duties and offices of a woman.

Woman has received from nature a heart of greater sensibility and tenderness than that of man, and hence she is more compassionate and sympathetic than man and more inclined to the exercise of fraternal charity. When her nature is elevated and ennobled by grace she does prodigies of charity; in this field she far surpasses man, and to be convinced of this it is only necessary to look upon that immense army of Sisters, who fill hospitals and orphanages, schools, infant asylums, and all the abodes where suffering and sorrow find a home. A woman is made for works of charity, she understands them, possesses the secret of doing

them, for she is made to be a mother, either really such or one by adoption.

This is what Solomon says in these words: "*She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor.*" This is a beautiful and an eloquent sentence. The woman portrayed by Solomon has by frugality, toil, and industry enriched the household; hers is a home of plenty. Does she keep all this accumulation of good things, the fruit of her hard work and watchfulness, for herself and for her children? No; she knows that beyond her gates there are poor; she looks upon them, loves them, makes them a part of her household, her children by adoption; she does not wait until they come knocking at her door, until she hears their suppliant and pitiful cries; she spares them the humiliation of asking aid; she goes to them, enters into their cabins, sits down at their firesides, learns their needs, and with a look full of love and tenderness, that doubles the value of the gift, holds out to them a helping hand. She not only opens her hand, she stretches out to them her palms: "*She hath stretched out her palms to the poor,*" that is, she pours out and is lavish with her alms. A truly blessed and wonderful woman! She toils indefatigably night and day; she is rich, she governs her household wisely, but she is also a mother

to the poor; the fruit of her industry and her savings find their way into the hands of the suffering and the wretched.

Ye women and mothers of families, whom heaven has so bountifully provided with the goods of fortune, why can not you also do what this woman did, whose portrait has been drawn for us by the Holy Spirit? Can you not save what you spend in extravagance and luxury and convert it into bread and clothing for the poor? It would be a blessed work if from time to time you visited the sick and the poor of the parish and saw with your own eyes their privations and their distress. What lessons you would learn, what pure and holy joy you would feel in your hearts! How you would contribute to bring together into one brotherhood all classes of society, the highest and the lowest, and what a treasure of merit you would be laying up for yourselves in heaven!

The verses that follow are only meant to elucidate the toilsome and godly works of the valiant woman, and I shall do little more than quote them. *"She shall not fear for her house in the cold of snow, for all her domestics are clothed with double garments."* This is an example of how this mistress provides lovingly and with a mother's care for her domestics! *"She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry; fine linen and purple is her covering."*

Her clothing is costly, but it is the work of her own hands and it is only fitting that it should be her adornment. *"Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sitteth among the senators of the land."* The industry, prudence, and virtue of the wife, who wisely governs her household, will do honor to her husband and he will be justly proud of her when he is in the midst of an assembly of men.[1] *"She made fine linen and sold it, and delivered a girdle to the Chanaanite."* The sacred writer goes on praising the woman for her labors and for busying herself in selling the product of them to enrich her family.[2] *"Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day."* She is more distinguished by her good works, her modesty, and her irreproachable life, which make her worthy of respect and reverence, than by fine clothes and showy attire; and when with the passing of the years the bloom will have faded from her cheeks, she will still be conspicuous for grace and dignity; her smile will be winning and kind, because it will be the radiance of

[1] I have already said that among the Hebrews court was held in a public place, at the gates of the city, and naturally men gathered there in large numbers.

[2] The Chanaanites mentioned here were likely the Phenicians of Tyre and Sidon, merchants well known along the coasts of the Mediterranean. The use of girdles was common in the Orient and they must have been a very important article of commerce.

virtue; and her noble and stately forehead will be encircled by the celestial halo of an innocent and holy life.

"She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue." "The tongue reveals the heart," so says Holy Writ. This woman's heart is a treasure of benevolence for all, and her heart will be revealed in her conversation; her words will be wise, gracious, prudent, and beneficial to all who listen to her; she will not sow quarrels, she will suppress them; her tongue will be a stranger to backbiting, arrogance, vanity, and levity. Is she not a pattern for imitation? I remind you of the words of the Holy Ghost: "If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man." Keep a good and an upright heart and your tongues will be governed by wisdom and benevolence.

"She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle." The wife and mother of a family ought to look not only to herself; she ought to watch over her children and all the members of her household; she ought to guide them, counsel them, admonish them, correct them, and, if need be, chastise them; so did the woman eulogized by Solomon, and so ought you mothers of families to do; you ought to bear in mind that the train-

ing of the family depends almost entirely upon you.

"Her children rise up and call her blessed." She is surrounded by her children; they have been piously bred; they love, respect, and obey her; they are her joy, and everywhere by word and deed they make known their mother and publish her praises. Can a mother be happier than she? May you all be as happy in your children as she was in hers.

Not only do her children call her blessed, her husband joins his voice to theirs in speaking her praises: *"Her husband, and he praised her."* There is no felicity and no honor a wife more values than to know that her husband esteems her, loves her, and avows that she is the source of his happiness. Do you wives so conduct yourselves as to merit such felicity?

"Many daughters," the Sacred Text goes on, *"have gathered together riches, thou hast surpassed them all.* Many daughters, after being married and having children born to them, have by labor and thrift enriched their families, but thou," says Solomon, addressing the valiant woman, who may have been his own mother, "by combining all the virtues with industry and frugality, hast by far surpassed them all, and none is comparable to thee."

Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain.[1] Wives and mothers, there is not a sentence in all this passage of the Sacred Text that is so worthy your attention as this. As we have a twofold nature, a body and a soul, so have we a twofold beauty or comeliness; and as the soul is superior to the body, so does the beauty of the former surpass that of the latter. Bodily beauty consists in a just proportion and harmony of its members, in strength, in a fine complexion, and in that assemblage of qualities of which, when taken together, it can be said: "It is beautiful." Beauty of soul consists in the conformity of the acts of mind and will to the eternal laws of the true, the just, and the good, a conformity that emanates from God and make us like to Him.

Now is bodily beauty a good and desirable thing? We can not doubt it, since it is a gift of God and a reflex and participation of that infinite beauty of which He is the perennial fountain. Why, then, does Solomon call it *deceitful* and *vain,* seemingly depreciating it? He calls it deceptive and vain because fre-

[1] The reader will have observed that in this chapter of the Proverbs, and generally throughout the whole Book, Solomon follows the style of the Psalms, the elevated Biblical style, in which every period is divided into two parts, in the second of which, what is said in the first, is repeated in another form. An example of this is the *Miserere* from beginning to end; this form is called επεσεγησις. So also here it is said: "Favor is deceitful" and it is added at once—"Beauty is vain."

quently it does not come from nature, but is the product of art, is extrinsic and adventitious, much of it being due to splendid dressing, to gems and necklaces, to artificial coloring, to the ornaments and dressing of the hair and the like. This sort of beauty is not yours, it is the beauty of things extrinsic to you, with which you adorn yourselves, and hence it is a beauty that is rightly called deceptive and vain.

Moreover, bodily beauty is easily lost or marred and lasts only for a short time. An accident, over-exertion, sickness, a trifle may spoil it; the passing years will inexorably deform and destroy it; after a few days the leaves of the glowing rose and dazzling lily fall one by one and rot away at the foot of the stem; a few years will be sufficient to turn your hair gray, to drive the color out of your face and mark it with furrows, to dim the light of your eye, to bow your frame, and to dry up and wither the freshness of your beauty. And does not all this prove beyond doubt that it is deceitful and vain? *"Favor is deceitful—Beauty is vain."*

But this is not the worst. Beauty is a fatal gift; it very frequently robs man and woman of their common-sense and clouds the light of their intellect; it intoxicates and maddens them, and hastens them along the way that leads to crime and infamy. For beauty sons make sad

the hearts of parents and married men dishonor the marriage bed and break their plighted vows; for beauty great fortunes are squandered, implacable hatreds are sown, duels are fought, poisonings are perpetrated, insane asylums are populated, innocent babes are barbarously murdered, suicides are multiplied, and rivers of tears and blood are made to flow. And after all this, is it too much to say that beauty is deceitful and vain? I leave the answer to you.

All this being true, love and seek another kind of beauty, a beauty that grows and increases in perfection as time goes on, that no one can rob you of and no one can mar, that is dear to God and man, that all may possess, that contributes to the happiness of families and of society and leads to heaven, namely, *the fear of God; "the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."* The woman that fears God, and therefore flies sin and lives virtuously, is the woman who is truly beautiful and worthy of all praise. "Let your beauty," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "be the embellishment of the soul,"[1] and St. John Chrysostom adds: "Let your beauty be, not a beauty of body, but the beauty of modesty and of an innocent

[1] "Pulchritudinem existima animi ornatum." (Apud A Lapide.)

life."[1] Beauty of body without beauty of soul is ugliness, deformity, depravity, a veil before the eyes, a pitfall to the feet, a snare, a fatal gift, and it may be a precipice, a path that leads to eternal perdition. Beauty allied with virtue grows daily more precious, beautiful, and lovable; it is like a ruby or diamond set in gold and scintillating in the light of the sun. Without despising bodily beauty seek the enduring and immortal beauty of the soul, that alone really embellishes, enhances, and gives value to that of the body.

I will close the Homily with the words with which Solomon closes the Book of Proverbs: "*Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.*" This is at once a cry of admiration and a wish or augury that comes straight from the heart of Solomon. O thou valiant woman, thou who hast labored with thy hands, who hast kept vigil through long nights, who hast honestly accumulated wealth, who hast been charitable and hast piously reared thy children, who hast ruled thy family kindly yet firmly, who hast been wise in not putting thy glory in fleeting bodily beauty, but in virtue, rejoice and be glad, and enjoy even here on earth the fruit of thy toil

[1] "Non in corporis forma, sed in moribus et modestia pulchritudo sita est." (Apud A Lapide.)

and virtue, and let men pay thee tribute and publicly celebrate thy praises.

This is a wish and an augury which I also leave to you mothers of families. May you, too, at least in some measure enjoy here on earth the fruit of your labors and anxieties, and may the world itself, which often judges unjustly, see and acknowledge your merits and virtue, and bestow upon them a just meed of praise.

HOMILY XVI

Mass for the Dedication of a Church

The Gospel of the Mass *Cognovi* is omitted, because it is the same as that of the Mass *Me exspectaverunt* already commented on.

The Epistle of the Mass *Terribilis*, of the dedication of a church, taken from the Apocalypse, is also omitted, because it is very short and contains no practical lesson that can be of profit to the people. It is better suited for a text of a Discourse on the triumph of the Church than for the subject of a Homily.

And entering He walked through Jericho. And behold there was a man named Zacheus, who was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And running before, he climbed up into a sycamore-tree, that he might see Him; for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, he saw him, and said to him: Zacheus, make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down; and received Him with joy. And when all saw it, they murmured saying, that He was gone to be a guest with a man

that was a sinner. But Zacheus standing, said to the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold. Jesus said to him: This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.—*Luke* xix. 1–10.

IT is clear from a comparison of the Gospel of St. Luke with the other Gospels that the fact here narrated took place during the last journey of Jesus from Galilee to Judea and a few days before His death.

On consulting a map of Palestine and following the road that leads from Jerusalem to the Jordan, Jericho will be found about twenty or twenty-five kilometers from that city in a northeasterly direction. It is now only a group of miserable huts. It was here the event just related took place, a record of which is left us only by St. Luke. It is one of the most beautiful and touching incidents to be met with in the Gospel, which contains so many similar ones.

It has been remarked, and with truth, that St. Luke has been at greater pains than the other evangelists to narrate the facts and parables that bring out into clearer light the benevolence and tender love of Jesus Christ for

sinners. Such assuredly is the fact that is the subject of the present Homily on this feast of the dedication of a church. If you will be good enough to listen to the exposition of the text you will be instructed, comforted, and pleased.

"*And entering in He walked through Jericho, and behold there was a man named Zacheus, who was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.*" Zacheus is the most conspicuous figure in this narrative. From his name it would appear that he was a Hebrew, but some Fathers, and their contention is supported by incidental facts in the Gospel, are inclined to believe that he was a Gentile. The fact that he was by calling chief of the tax or revenue collectors, a class most odious to the Hebrews, seems to leave no doubt that he was a Gentile. He may, however, have been one of those Gentiles, of whom frequent mention is made in the Gospel, who adored the true God and were called proselytes. The Gospel says absolutely nothing of his country, his origin, or his characteristics; it simply says that he was rich: "*And he was rich.*" Having, as if purposely, mentioned together his calling and his wealth it leaves us to infer that the source of his wealth, which was certainly not honestly gained, was his office of chief of the tax-gatherers. Zacheus must have been an inferior

head of tax-collectors, dependent upon a superior, who resided in Cæsarea, as he was dependent on the supreme official resident in Rome. These officials as a class were in bad repute, either because of their office, which was odious to the Hebrews, or because of the abuse they made of it by cheating, defrauding, and extorting money from their unfortunate subjects, thus enriching themselves. They were also detested by the Hebrews because they were all Gentiles and foreigners, and if there was ever a people that was restless under the yoke of a stranger it was certainly the Hebrew people, and of this they gave appalling proofs. It is sufficient to mention that they designated those tax-gatherers, or collectors of revenue, by a name that in the Hebrew tongue says all: *"They were sinners."*

What sort of man was this Zacheus morally or religiously considered? Taking all things together I think I make no mistake in saying that he was one of those men who are wholly absorbed in the business of their office; he thought only of collecting imposts and of accumulating wealth, and he was not over-scrupulous as to the justice of his methods; but he thought little if at all of God, of his soul, of the life to come and of his religious duties. Of men of this class, wholly engrossed by their

material interests and forgetful of the interests of their souls, our own Christian society unfortunately affords many examples.

Still it is clear from the Gospel that Zacheus possessed many sterling qualities, and it was due to these that a way was opened up to him to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be converted. Although rich and occupying no inconsiderable rank as a public officer he was by no means proud. Moreover, he had received from nature an upright and frank disposition, and he had a good heart. In a word he was one of that class, who, while intent upon worldly affairs and upon enriching themselves, are capable of generous and magnanimous acts, once the grace of God moves them, once He calls them to Himself and points out to them the path to be pursued.

Zacheus had certainly often and often heard Jesus spoken of as a prophet, a worker of miracles, a man of God, a saint, and as the Messias expected by the people. Naturally, the malicious accusations brought against Him by His enemies were not unknown to him, nor was he ignorant of the ferocious hatred which the chiefs of the people had conceived against Him. Jerusalem, the center of the enemies of Jesus, was so near the home of Zacheus that it was impossible that he, a business man and a public official, should not know the relations existing

between Our Lord and the representative men of His country. For above three years the name of Jesus Christ had been in the mouths of all, and Zacheus had never yet seen this wonderful man. It was but natural that he should desire to see Him. We all desire to see a man who because of his intellect, power, and great achievements, or for some other reason, enjoys an extraordinary and world-wide reputation.

Suddenly a report spreads through the town of Jericho that Jesus and His disciples are approaching its gates, and the cry, repeated by a hundred tongues, goes up: *"Jesus is here!"* The cry reaches the ears of Zacheus, engaged on his ledgers, wholly absorbed in his affairs, and it, may be, counting his gains. He at once, like others, conceives a desire of seeing this marvelous personage, an object of profound hatred to some and of ardent love and supreme hope to others. He at once abandons his ledgers and his business and rushes just as he is out into the public street. The great multitude advances, the air vibrates with shouts, huzzas, and applause. Zacheus longs to see Jesus and now that Jesus is only a few feet away the longing becomes more intense: *"He sought to see Jesus."* But how is this possible? Jesus is there in the midst of a multitude that precedes Him, follows Him, and hems Him in on all

sides and *Zacheus was low of stature.* He makes several attempts, rises on tiptoe, ascends a little mound of earth, looks intently from one to another striving to fix his eyes on the face of Jesus, but all to no purpose. The living mass of humanity that surrounds Jesus and moves forward with Him, extinguishes in him all hope of gratifying the desire that consumes him and burns within him.[1] A desire that is balked grows more vehement. What did Zacheus do? Looking about on all sides of him he sees in the distance, on the road on which Jesus was advancing, a tall tree that proudly lifted its crest toward the sky. It was a sycamore, a species of wild fig, called *Egyptian fig.* Note here how careful the evangelist is to give even the name of the tree. The thought came into the mind of Zacheus that by climbing that tree he might get sight of Jesus. He does not hesitate an instant, and after running a little way he is at the foot of the tree: *"Running before,"* says the evangelist. Putting his arms about it by aid of hands and feet he climbs up and seating himself on a branch waits there to see Jesus, who is to pass that way: *"That he might see Him, for He was to pass that way."* This fact of itself reveals the character of

[1] This fact clearly proves that the crowd that followed Jesus must have been very great, and such was nearly always the case.

Zacheus. He was rich, held an important office, was necessarily, because of his duties, a man of some education and must have had a proper sense of his dignity. All this would have made it unbecoming for him to run in haste along a public highway, to climb a tree and like a boy or a man of the lower class, to sit there in an awkward position in the presence of a great crowd, waiting, he a Gentile in the midst of Hebrews, to gaze upon a Hebrew. Would a Scribe, a Doctor of the Law, a Pharisee have done such a thing? I think not. The extreme care these gentlemen took to preserve their dignity, their overweening pride and haughtiness, would have prevented them from doing actions so indecorous; but Zacheus, the chief of the tax-gatherers, rich and well-bred, does not hesitate an instant and accomplishes it all in less time than it takes to narrate it. All this, my friends, reveals to us the character of Zacheus; he was open, frank, resolute, and cared nothing for those proprieties to which the proud cling so tenaciously. In a word, Zacheus was one of those men who are capable of generous resolutions once the call of God is made clear to them, and a proof of this we shall presently see.

"*And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up He saw him and said to him: Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this*

day I must abide in thy house.'' I fancy I can see Zacheus among the branches of the sycamore tree, his eyes turned in the direction whence he expected Jesus to come. Jesus came on slowly, almost borne along by the crowd. Zacheus eagerly sought among the multitude Him whom he longed to look upon and to whom he felt himself mysteriously drawn, and it was not difficult to recognize Him. The eyes of all, fixed upon Him alone, clearly pointed Him out, and so did His easy and dignified bearing, His composed and angelically modest countenance, His sweet smile, His eyes beaming with love, His serene forehead, His entire person, from which went forth a ray of the Divinity hidden within. All cried out: ''There is Jesus!'' Zacheus, beside himself with joy and amazement, looks upon Him, contemplates Him, feels happy almost to ecstasy, and can not take his eyes off Him. Jesus is now near the spot, under the tree. Suddenly He stops, and so also does the multitude that presses upon Him and waves to and fro like wheat when caressed by a light passing breeze. Jesus stops, looks up and sees Zacheus: *''And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up He saw him.''* Whither Jesus directs His eyes there also the eyes of the multitude follow, and they see the little Zacheus clinging to a branch, unable to conceal himself and abashed at find-

ing himself suddenly become the object of general curiosity. There was a whispering and all asked together: "Who is that man?" As quick as a flash the answer passed from mouth to mouth: "That is Zacheus, the chief of the tax-collectors." Some hear the name with amazement, some smile a bitter smile of disdain or compassion. The voice of Jesus speaking compels silence: *"Zacheus,"* He said, *"make haste and come down."* Jesus calls him by name and speaks to him as to an old friend. One can almost feel the beatings of the heart of Jesus in these words; they breathe benevolence, inspire confidence, imply a friendly familiarity beyond the power of words to express. And to fill the measure of Zacheus' joy and make him feel the illimitable confidence reposed in him, Jesus adds: *"This day I must abide in thy house."* How good is the divine Master! He is God, the owner and lord of all things, infinite majesty itself, and he speaks to a poor man, a Gentile, a sinner, one wholly given over to business; He condescends to be his guest, to sit at his table, to pass the day with him! O divine Saviour! Thou dost abase Thyself overmuch in being so familiar with this man, who is a sinner and has grown rich on the fruit of theft; Thou dost scandalize the Doctors of the Law; and what will the Pharisees say of Thee, making Thyself so com-

mon with the scum of the earth whom the people call sinners? Jesus does not heed their judgments, He seeks only the salvation of souls, and a little farther on we shall hear the sublime answer He gave them. Zacheus on hearing those words fancied he was dreaming. Only a few moments ago his one desire was to look upon Jesus; he never so much as dared to hope to speak to Him; and now he hears himself called by name, treated as a friend, and has the honor of having Him as his guest in his own house and of entertaining Him at his leisure. He can not realize that he is himself; the honor done him is beyond everything he could possibly hope for; he forgets everything, one single thought fills his mind and makes him the happiest of men—he has Jesus with him in his own house! *"And he made haste and came down,"* and there he is now at the feet of Jesus, his heart flooded with joy: *"And he received Him with joy,"* and offered himself to conduct Jesus and the disciples to his home.

And here is a thought that should not escape you. A short half hour ago this man was at his counter, wholly engrossed in business; he had only one thought, that of getting rich. The thefts he had committed did not cost him a pang of conscience; he gave not even a fleeting thought to God, to the divine judgment, to his soul, to eternal salvation; he was literally

a man of the world in the broadest meaning of that term. Now he cares nothing for business; the idea of enriching himself does not enter into his thoughts; he is transformed into another man; the fact that he has had the happiness of seeing Jesus, of being near Him, of conducting Him to his home, makes him forget everything else; for the enjoyment of this favor he is ready, as we shall soon see, to throw away all his wealth and to give up everything. Whence and how comes this profound and speedy change of mind and heart? Without doubt it comes from the grace of God that works in him when and as it will, but not without the concurrence of his will, which responds promptly and generously, because he is free from the filthy leprosy of pride of intellect and arrogance of heart. The Doctors of the Law were there, and so were the Scribes and Pharisees, but of none of them did Jesus offer to be the guest, because they were reeking with pride; this publican, on the contrary, who had no knowledge of the Sacred Books, knew the truth, loved it, and was worthy of receiving Jesus into his house, because he was humble and upright. Now what was the occasion, what the thread, that Jesus made use of to draw this fortunate publican to Himself? Just common curiosity. He desired to see Jesus, he went to see Him, he climbed a tree to see Him, he heard

His words and felt himself drawn and bound to Him by the ties of faith and burning love. How often does it happen that curiosity, the most ordinary and vulgar curiosity, attracts a certain class of sinners to Church to witness the ceremonies, to hear the music, to listen to a speaker, and there they feel springing up in their hearts thoughts of God and sorrow for sin, that gradually lead to their conversion! God finds a way to the heart of man by many means, even by those that seem the most unlikely. Of this Zacheus is a proof.

Jesus, together with the apostles, turned His steps toward the house of Zacheus, who taking a position at His side joyously led the way. The words of Jesus were: *"Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house;"* and the multitude, seeing Jesus and the apostles set out together for the house of Zacheus, began at once to murmur: *"And when all saw it they murmured."* The Gospel says *"all murmured,"* still I think that here *all* means *many,* and particularly the Pharisees, the everlasting and implacable enemies of Jesus. And why did they murmur? *"Because He was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner."*

Now, my friends, I beg you to note here a fact painful indeed and humiliating to us men, but instructive. Do you see that multitude that fol-

lows Jesus and shouts huzzas as He passes along the streets? They venerate Him as a prophet, as a wonder-worker, and one should say that they would be ready to follow Him anywhere, to accept His every word as an oracle from heaven, and to do His every behest. And a single act of Jesus, which they do not comprehend, which does violence to their prejudices, is enough to chill their enthusiasm and to make them openly hostile to Him. On seeing Jesus set out for the house of Zacheus they are at first amazed, then they begin loudly to complain and are scandalized at His conduct: "*And all murmured.*" They ought to have said: "Jesus is a prophet and a saint, He is the Messias, and therefore whatever He does must be good and worthy of Him; if He goes to the house of Zacheus, it is because Zacheus is either already converted or on the way to conversion, and we ought to rejoice at this." But instead they do just the contrary, saying: "What is the meaning of this? Can it be that Jesus is going to the house of a sinner? That He will associate with this breed of evil traffickers? Then He is not a prophet and a saint, He is not the Messias." They blame and condemn Him with incredible rashness. My friends, learn to know how light and fickle the judgments of the world are; it violates the most ordinary laws of justice in common things; it

closes its eyes to the light of truth, and it does not hesitate to condemn even Christ Himself rather than give up its prejudices: "*And all murmured.*" Instantly the huzzas were hushed and the applause was changed into recrimination and insult!

We know what was the spirit of the Pharisees, which was now infused into and transferred to the multitude. They were proud; they accounted themselves righteous and without fault; they despised every one, but especially those poor publicans and Gentiles; they looked upon it as a contamination to enter into the house of the Gentile Pilate, and as a crime to associate and converse with publicans; and yet to blacken their neighbor's character, to condemn Jesus, to insult and misjudge Him, who by His life and miracles had shown who He was, and whom even they had saluted as a master, they regarded as a matter of no consequence at all. Such are the ceaseless and inexplicable contradictions of man!

But you will say: You priests in explaining the Gospel to us never leave off warning us to shun evil companionship, to flee the sowers of false doctrine, not even to break bread with them, or to return their salutation; you tell us to separate from corrupters of morals, if we do not wish to become their victims. And now you extol the goodness of Jesus Christ to sin-

ners, exhort us to imitate Him and to reject the churlish doctrine of the Pharisees, who spurned them. How can these two doctrines, so diametrically opposed to each other, be reconciled? They can be easily reconciled. Listen:

There are all sorts of men in the world, unbelievers, scandal-mongers, agitators, and corrupters of morals, who by word and deed spread the poison of their teachings and the contagion of their perverse conduct. What are we to do? What rule are we to hold with regard to them? If because of our weakness and ignorance and their astuteness in the arts of deception and seduction, we should by living and associating with them be in serious danger of losing our faith or of having our morals corrupted, and if it is possible to separate from them, we must do so. This our own welfare and the duty that obliges us not to expose ourselves to the risk of offending God and of losing our souls both demand. If we live and associate with wicked people or they with us, for reasons that it is not possible here to specify; and if on the one hand there is no danger in doing so, and on the other there are adequate reasons for maintaining these ordinary, and even intimate relations and no scandal comes of it, we are not obliged to break them off, and we may with the necessary precautions continue them. We

know of even holy men who cultivated the friendship of heretics, schismatics, and unbelievers. If the duty we owe to friends and relations, or the sacred ministry we exercise, obliges us to live on friendly terms with the erring, and if there is a hope of bringing them back to the right path, or even of rendering their influence less dangerous or less mischievous, and if there is no risk of giving scandal or of being ourselves perverted, why should we not associate with them? St. Francis Xavier at times went among blasphemers and sinners of every class; he appeared not to hear their blasphemies and vile conversation; he entered into their sports and games; and in the end he converted them. This is how St. Francis Xavier, another St. Paul, understood the Gospel.

Nevertheless, whether special conditions permit of our maintaining ordinary or even intimate relations with sinners, or whether the charity we owe to ourselves and the necessity of removing scandal or other causes forbid this, we must always regard them as our brothers, do them any favor that it is in our power to do them, and refuse to harbor in our hearts the slightest sentiment of resentment or rancor against them; for all this the natural law requires, and so do the precepts of the Gospel and the example given us by Jesus Christ.

While the Scribes and Pharisees, and a part of the multitude influenced by the teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, censured Jesus, He continued on His way and entered the house of Zacheus. It is quite credible that the friends and acquaintances of Zacheus, either invited by him to honor so distinguished a guest or coming of their own accord, at once hastened thither and filled the house. While the meal was being prepared Jesus, according to His custom, sat down and began to speak to the throng that surrounded Him and hung upon His lips. A beautiful and sublime sight is that of Jesus, the Son of God and of the Virgin, the Saint of saints, sitting there in the midst of publicans and sinners, all gentleness and kindness as a friend among friends, or rather, as a father in the midst of his children! What a difference between Him and the Pharisees! They fled from sinners, looked down upon them as something wholly beneath them and spurned them with haughty disdain. Begone from us, they said; do not touch us, for we are clean. Jesus, on the contrary, calls them to Him, treats them with loving-kindness, instructs them; He utters not a harsh word, not a single reproof; He does not by word or act show annoyance or disdain at their presence. He speaks and while the truth that issues from His lips illuminates their minds and rouses their wills, an inward

grace touches them, stirs and transforms them.

I fancy I can see Zacheus standing there at the side of Jesus, looking into His countenance and listening to Him as one carried out of himself for very joy. The presence, the proximity of a pious and holy person, his gentle, wise, and ingratiating conversation, attract us, bind us to him, fascinate and ravish us, and give us a momentary taste of ineffable joy. Fancy what a fascination Jesus, the Man-God, exercised upon all those who came near Him and listened to His words.

And now let us look into the heart of Zacheus and see the tumult of affections and sentiments that succeed and jostle one another there without intermission. He, the chief of tax-gatherers, keeps his eyes on Jesus, and what a ferment that vision stirs in his soul. He must have said to himself some such words as these: "This is that Jesus whose name fills all Judea. How good and lovable He is! How wise! And He is here in my house! He who is so great, He, a saint, a prophet, the Messias, does not disdain to sojourn here in the midst of sinners." And then his mind goes back over the past; he remembers his sins and his transgressions, but more than all his thefts; he feels abashed and humiliated; his heart throbs violently in his bosom, his conscience is a tor-

ture to him, he is agitated and craves for peace. But how is he to secure it? Who can give it to him? A single word from the kind-hearted Jesus would heal his soul and bring him peace. And reasoning with himself he says: "Why not open my heart to Him? Why not ask Him to speak this word which alone can give me peace? By His very presence He has raised a storm in my conscience and He alone can calm it." But another voice within him, the voice of frightened self-love, replies: "If you go to Him privately, with none other present, when darkness has set in, in some corner of the house, where no one will see you or hear you, and there and then cast yourself at His feet and crave pardon, He will forgive you. But if you should do this publicly, what shame will overwhelm you! What will your friends, acquaintances, and relations say? What will the Scribes and Pharisees say? How can you ever again show yourself in public?" Thus Zacheus oscillated between yes and no, on the one hand tortured by his conscience, which yearned for peace, and on the other, by his self-love, which loudly protested against being slain as a victim. But grace gained the victory. "My sins," he said, "have been public, why should not my avowal of them and my repentance also be public? I have not been ashamed to rob others, why should I be ashamed to restore my ill-

gotten gains? My peace of heart is more to me than the sacrifice conscience demands." And with his mind filled with this thought he rises up and says to Jesus: *"Lord, I give the half of my goods to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold."*

How can we help admiring this man's greatness of soul and his generosity? How can we help being amazed at his force of will and his complete transformation? Only a little while ago and he was sitting at his counter, thinking only of how he could amass wealth; he would not have given a penny in alms to the poor, rather he was putting out his hand to clutch what did not belong to him; and now, without being advised or counseled to do so by any one, in the ardor of his faith and impelled by a sentiment of justice, he freely strips himself of half the wealth it had cost him so much toil and effort to accumulate. If any one of you here present were told that here, now and at once, you must, as a condition of salvation, give up half of all you possess, what would you do? Would you have the courage and resolution to make the sacrifice? Let your conscience give you the answer. Zacheus, the man of business, the Gentile and the tax-gatherer, did not hesitate; he said and he did. Let us on the one hand recognize and admire the power of God's

grace, which within an hour or less changes a worldling and a robber into a hero and a saint, and on the other the promptitude and sincerity of Zacheus' conversion. He does not say, as do so many others: "I shall make restoration by-and-by, but first before dying I must provide for myself;" and they end by doing nothing; whereas Zacheus says: "I give half of my goods to the poor," and he does so instantly.[1]

But it will be said: Justice requires that ill-gotten goods shall be restored to him who has been robbed or damaged; and he who thinks that he does his duty by giving to the poor what belongs to the owner is a bad accountant and does not satisfy his obligations. This is all true, my friends, and if you have stolen from your neighbor, or done him damage, be he rich or poor, you must give him what is his, or you can not hope to obtain forgiveness.

Very well, you will reply; how then can the Gospel take it for granted that Zacheus, by giving the fruit of his thefts into the hands of the poor, is absolved from all further obligation? When it is not possible to make restitution to those who have been robbed or damaged, either because we do not know them, or for any other adequate reason, we may and

[1] The Mosaic Law condemned a convicted thief to give back four times as much as he had stolen, and to this law Zacheus alludes.

must imitate Zacheus and give to the poor what we ourselves may not rightfully retain.

All those present marvelled and must have been moved to tears on hearing this open confession and generous resolution of Zacheus. Jesus broke the silence, saying: *"This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham,"* that is: "This man, who never thought of his soul and pursued the paths of sin, has repented and entered upon the path of life; according to the flesh he is not a son of Abraham, having been born a Gentile, but he has become truly one according to the spirit by his fidelity to grace and by his conversion. And," Christ goes on to say, "how could it be otherwise? *For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.* For what did I come upon earth?" Jesus seems to ask. "For one and only one end, to seek out and to save sinners." Note the words *"to seek."* Jesus in His goodness goes in search of sinners; He is beforehand with them by His grace, He calls them, He draws them by every lure, by the attractions of love, by the stings of conscience, by the rod of chastisement. What a comfort for us sinners! What a consoling hope His mercy holds out! What an example for us, His ministers, to imitate!

I have finished the explanation of the Gospel, but it is worth while to inquire why the Sacred

Liturgy has seen fit to have us read this fact in the Mass of this day, on which we celebrate the feast of the dedication or consecration of a church. The reason is clear and will occur to any one who reflects a little on the fact itself. The fact narrated in the Gospel was enacted and completed in the house of Zacheus, and between this house and the church, which is called and which is the House of the Lord, there are many and striking points of resemblance, which I will now hastily indicate.

In the house of Zacheus were Our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles; in the church are Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under the august Sacrament of the Altar, and His ministers, the priests. In the house of Zacheus together with Jesus Christ and His apostles were Zacheus himself, his friends, and companions, publicans and sinners; in the church, together with the just, are sinners of all kinds, who freely enter there. In the house of Zacheus Jesus Christ preached His Gospel and announced the eternal truths to disciples and sinners; in the church those who continue His work announce the same truths to all indiscriminately. In the house of Zacheus he himself and most likely many other sinners were converted; in the church sinners are being continually converted by the word of God and loosed from their sins by the ministry of the priesthood. In the house of Zacheus a

feast was prepared of which Jesus and all those with Him partook; in the Church the heavenly banquet of the Blessed Eucharist is always prepared and of it all may partake who believe in Jesus Christ and live holily according to His law. The house of Zacheus, as long as Jesus Christ sojourned there, was a school of truth, a center of life, a fountain of grace, an abode of peace; the Church is also a school of the same truth, a center of divine light, a fountain of grace, dispensed there through the sacraments, and a house where peace is made between God and man and between man and man. Rightly then does the Sacred Liturgy see in the house of Zacheus an image of this church, and on this day of its solemn dedication bids us meditate on what Jesus Christ did in the house of Zacheus, for it is a figure of what is daily done in every church.

My friends, one final reflection and I have done. Had you lived at the time of Jesus Christ and had you chanced to be in Jericho when He was there, and received an invitation to go with Him to the house of Zacheus, how gladly would you have gone! How respectfully and reverently you would have behaved! How attentively you would have listened to the words of Jesus Christ! Very well; now this house is the very house of Zacheus; here Jesus abides permanently, He calls you, He

speaks to you, He offers you His grace, He holds out to you His body as food and His blood as drink. Then come here, abide here, behave with all respect and reverence, listen to His words, lay down the burden of your sins, kneel often at the Heavenly Banquet which He Himself prepares for you, and which is a pledge and an earnest of that which He has prepared for you in heaven.

Laus Deo.

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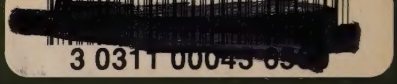
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